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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended to aid in the design of parent education courses for refugee and immigrant parents, especially those who are having problems in relations with their children. The presentation is based on the experience of three parent-education projects, each of which conducted an 8-week course for Cambodian refugees who were experiencing difficulties in their parenting roles. Chapter 1 explains the purpose and design of the guide. Chapter 2 discusses Cambodian refugees in America and their problems, needs, and issues with their children. Chapter 3 describes the parent education program in Providence, Rhode Island, that focused on empowering Cambodian parents to discipline their children. Chapter 4 relates the experience of the Tacoma, Washington, project that helped parents and children understand each other in their new life in the United States. Chapter 5 describes the Bronx, New York, project, which helped parents become closer to their children and improve their parenting skills. Chapters 6 and 7 offer program planning advice based on the content of the program descriptions. Chapter 8 analyzes the outcome evaluations of the three parent education programs, while chapter 9 offers some conclusions to the evaluation chapter and to the guide as a whole. (TJQ)

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New Beginnings

A Guide to Designing Parenting Programs for Refugee and Immigrant Parents

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Cover photograph: A mother and child from the Krung-Brau tribe (Ratanakiri, Cambodia)—UN Photo 186111/J. Isaac

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Lift up your eyes upon
This day breaking for you.
Give birth again
To the dream.

Women, children, men,
Take it into the palms of your hands,
Mold it into the shape of your most
Private need. Sculpt it into
The image of your most public self.
Lift up your hearts
Each new hour holds new chances
For a new beginning.
Do not be wedded forever
To fear, yoked eternally
To brutishness.

From ON THE PULSE OF MORNING by Maya Angelou
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Introduction

Refugees are people whose lives have been indelibly marked by painful separation and loss. Unlike immigrants who choose to leave their homelands, refugees are forced into exile by war, by oppression, and by fear.

Refugees have lost their homes, possessions, and family members...their community, culture, language, friends. They are ordinary people whose lives have been changed forever by circumstances beyond their control.

Indeed this has been the tragic history of Cambodian refugees. From the middle of 1975 until 1978, one to three million Cambodians, out of a population of seven million, died in the holocaust of the Pol Pot regime. The Khmer Rouge forces swept the country in waves of terror, stripping and destroying the land and its culture, and brutalizing the people.

Those who escaped the mass atrocities endured life-threatening flights to overcrowded refugee camps marked by material scarcity, more violence, and uncertainty. Several hundred thousand Cambodians languished in these camps until the international community mobilized their repatriation.

Since that time, an estimated 140,000 Cambodian refugees have been resettled in the United States, and when children born here are counted, that total figure is naturally increased. They are among the more than one million Southeast Asian refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam who were resettled in the U.S. between 1975 and 1992 so that they could rebuild their lives.

Refugees are survivors who bring many gifts to our nation. Their courage, will to survive, and ambition are evidenced through their very survival.[1] The programs in this guide seek to preserve and foster the cultural, spiritual, and religious values of Southeast Asian parents as well as introduce new skills to boost their adjustment to life in a new land. In this regard, the spirit of the effort remains loyal to refugee leaders who believe that adaptation is the key to rebuilding lives in a new culture.

These parent education programs had their origins in a national conference convened by the International Catholic Child Bureau's Office for North America in 1988. The special focus of that conference was Southeast Asian refugee children in the U.S. and their psychological, social, and spiritual needs.

Conference participants—Southeast Asian parents, leaders, clergy, educators, and administrators—urged the development of parent support groups whereby parents would be encouraged to draw positively on their own cultures, traditions, and values to effectively raise their children in a new culture.

Implicit in their recommendations are the challenges associated with the delicate art of adaptation. As conference participants observed: "Many Southeast Asian parents try to recreate the same family life in the U.S. that they had in their home country. Their children try to remain 'Southeast Asian' at home and strive to be 'American' in school and with their peers. This is an issue which parents have to address. Parents need an opportunity to voice their concerns and exchange views on how they can better relate to their children."[2] Kao Yang, President of the Hmong Catholic As-

sociation, sought a compromise: "As parents we know that to survive in this country we must adapt to this society. We want our children to adapt to whatever is necessary for them to get into the mainstream of life. But at that same time, we want them to retain their own traditions."[3]

Conference participants expressed particular concern for Cambodians. Khamchong Luangpraseut, Supervisor of Indochinese Programs in Santa Ana, California observed: "Many, too many Cambodian families are headed today by single parents, female parents. There is a lot of misunderstanding going on between kids and parents in our Cambodian situation." Luangpraseut emphasized that the source of this phenomenon was the devastating impact of the Pol Pot regime.

After carefully reviewing the recommendations in consultation with refugee advisors, ICCB organized three parental training projects for Cambodians. The staff at each site—coordinators and bilingual facilitator—met in advance with ICCB staff and documenter for the project to agree on principles for project development. That is, the purpose of the parenting sessions was to encourage communities to draw on their own culture, traditions, values, and personal resources so that they could more effectively raise their children in a new country. Furthermore, parents would be encouraged to achieve a comfortable balance between their own values and those of the host country. It was agreed that the weekly sessions should provide parents with the "tools"to analyze their own experiences and/or problems and make decisions on how to solve them.

Training was conducted at three sites which are now "home" to significant numbers of Cambodians and other Southeast Asians: Tacoma, Washington; Providence, Rhode Island; and the Bronx, New York. The bureau selected these sites based on contact with professional leaders involved in the conference who expressed a need for these groups. As with other ICCB projects, the final phase of the process was to publish the findings so that the project may be studied and adapted for use in other locales.

Southeast Asian community leaders and refugee agency professionals advised ICCB to work through the family—in particular, with the parents—to help them address family problems such as discipline, intergenerational conflict, gangs, and drug abuse. ICCB also learned that it would be culturally beneficial and more effective to help children and their parents to deal with these problems together as a family, rather than as isolated individuals.

While no list is exhaustive, the traditional values generally associated with Southeast Asians are: a strong family life, loyalty, respect for elders, interdependence, and a belief in education and hard work. ICCB's parent education projects implicitly built on the inner strengths of the parents, exhibited in personal characteristics such as reflection, effective problem solving, and coping skills. The projects also aimed to restore and reinforce a positive self-concept and a sense of individual control, to replace feelings of helplessness.

As these values and inner strengths may also be found in the larger Southeast Asian community, consider that the projects may be helpful for Lao, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Khmu families too. And while this guide was primarily designed for

refugees, it may encourage immigrant families that are also involved in struggles of cultural adaptation and family life.

Building on the strengths and resources of children, their families, and communities is a central focus of the ICCB. The ICCB promotes the physical, psychological, social, educational, and spiritual growth of children of all faiths. The ICCB was created after World War II in Europe to complement the work of relief-based agencies consumed with meeting the urgent needs of children and families. The ICCB provides technical training and assistance to those who care for children: community workers, parents, and child care professionals.

The ICCB headquarters are in Geneva, Switzerland, with regional offices in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America. ICCB advocacy for the best interest of the child is carried out at the United Nations and through related agencies in: Geneva, Switzerland; Paris, France; Vienna, Austria; and New York, U.S.A., as well as the Council of Europe and the European Economic Community. The parent education programs for Cambodians is a project of the ICCB Office for North America, located in New York City.

Kampuan women carrying their infants near Bong Long, Cambodia

UN Photo 186088/P.S. Sudhakaran

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A young girl holding a baby in Kandal Province, Cambodia

UN Photo 186042/P.S.Sudhakaran

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I

PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THIS GUIDE

The purpose of this guide is to help you design a parent education course for refugee and immigrant parents, especially those who are having problems in relations with their children.

The presentation is based on the experience of three parent education projects—Providence, Rhode Island; Tacoma, Washington; and the Bronx, New York—sponsored and coordinated by the North American office of the International Catholic Child Bureau.* Each of these three programs conducted an eight-week course for Cambodian refugees who were experiencing difficulties in their parenting roles.

The course designs differed greatly from one city to another—which is part of the fascination and usefulness of this account. The differences in course design stemmed largely from each program's assessments of the needs of the participating parents and their families.

We anticipate that each of the three programs will provide a richness of experience from which to generate a program design for your own situation.

* The project was partially funded by three private foundations which request to remain anonymous.

While the experience is based on work with Cambodian refugee families, we believe the results have broad application to other immigrant and refugee groups.

All three programs are actually about parental empowerment. Each program asks parents to take a hard look at themselves, their children, and their situation and to take action to prevent and improve conflictful parent-child relationships that are harmful to parent, child, and the family as a whole.

Our intent in this manual is to give you some tools for profiting from the experience of these three pilot projects. Chapter II presents a general cultural historical background of the Cambodian refugee population in America. In Chapters III, IV, and V, we present the story of each site's attempts to meet the needs of their course participants. ***We call these "stories" because they describe sequential unfolding of events, designed to meet problems, often involving encounters with obstacles, and guided by aims, perceptions, and passions of the project staffs and the participating parents.***

The three accounts are presented in the order in which the courses occurred (Providence, Rhode Island, September 17-November 5, 1991; Tacoma, Washington, October 1 - November 19, 1991; and the Bronx, New York, May 22 - July 2, 1992).

The observations and reflections included in these three accounts were gathered in two-day visits to each site by the author, Daniel Scheinfeld, in the seventh week of each course series. At each site he interviewed staff for roughly eight hours, interviewed parents, observed a class session and collected program documents. In this mission he was often as-

sisted by staff of the New York ICCB office: Meg Gardinier, the executive director, or her assistant Dana Wolf.

The material presented here is derived largely from the staff members' accounts. The language is essentially theirs, even when not put specifically in quotes. In each case, we benefit greatly from the staff's generous sharing of their reflections on the strengths and limitations of their own program designs.

Each account describes:

- the staff's perception of the needs of the parents;
- the goals for the course (emanating from their perceptions of parent need);
- the major principles underlying the course design;
- a weekly description of the course as it unfolded, frequently accompanied by the staff's evaluation of the process;
- the staff's overall assessment of the eight-week sequence and their thoughts about the design of future courses.

As an aid to reading these stories, we suggest a number of questions that can be asked while reading each of the accounts. These may be helpful in utilizing the experience of these projects in the design of a new parent education series. You may have questions to add to this list.

- How did the program staff arrive at a decision about what content to include in the course?
- What were the skills and perspectives that the program tried to develop in the participants?

- What assumptions did the program have about the learning process; i.e, through what processes was it believed that parents would learn most effectively?
- What was the logic underlying the sequential arrangement of the classes? Did each build on the next in significant ways?
- What were the most important supports provided to help parents feel comfortable and recognized?
- What major changes were made along the way, as the staff learned more about the participants or encountered stumbling blocks?
- What major lessons did the staff learn on how to run future parent education programs for their target group?

After reading the three stories you will find two chapters (VI and VII) designed to help you utilize the content of these stories in your own planning process. Chapter VIII, Evaluation of Program Impact, provides analyses of the outcome evaluations of the three sites. Finally, Chapter IX suggests some conclusions to the evaluation chapter and to the guide as a whole.

II

THE CAMBODIAN REFUGEES IN AMERICA

Who are they? What are their problems, needs, and issues with their children?

Some 180,000 Cambodian refugees currently live in the United States, including the children born after arrival.

These families have been in the United States from four to ten years. The majority are of rural agricultural background. Most of the adult women and many of the men are limited to a second- or third-grade education.[4,5,6]

The recent history of these families stems from the attempts of the Khmer Rouge regime to destroy both the traditional rural and the Western-influenced urban cultures of the Cambodian people in the mid and late 1970's. Wishing to establish a purist Marxist agrarian society throughout the land, the strategy of the Khmer Rouge included the systematic destruction of those who had more than a rudimentary education or who in any way were identified as standing in the way of the new order. Between these systematic murders and the large number of people who died of starvation, 35-50% of the Cambodian population died during the four years of Khmer Rouge domination.

Prior to their arrival in the United States, the Cambodian refugees had spent from one to six years in refugee camps in

Thailand. Families and individuals either trickled across the Thai border during the Khmer Rouge years or arrived in the massive exodus that occurred following the Vietnamese displacement of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979.

Among the Cambodian refugees in American cities today, there is a configuration of forces contributing in many cases to family tensions and general estrangement in the parent-child relationship in the pre-adolescent and adolescent periods.

As with many other refugee and immigrant groups, Cambodian refugee parents have experienced widespread fatigue and depression resulting from relentless economic pressures and cultural alienation. Thus, their abilities to deal with the complexities of raising children in a foreign culture are weakened. Often they lack the energy to discipline their children consistently. Some adults cope with the pressures by abusing alcohol or by gambling, both of which contribute further to family instability.

Contributing to this very significant malaise in the Cambodian community is the trauma of the Khmer Rouge years during which almost all of the parent generation suffered terribly. Virtually all experienced the destruction of family members. They are still bearing the burden of that previous life of terror, starvation, and relentless stress.[7,8] A witness to this heritage are the 200 cases of hysterical blindness reported among Cambodian refugee women in the United States, linked to observing the slaughter of those close to them.[9]

Amidst all these signs of stress, many of the families are experiencing crises in their relationships with their children.[10,11] These tensions often erupt into child behavior

which tends to be destructive to both children and families. Such problems include breakdowns in intergenerational communication, accompanied by children running away, failing to attend school, or engaging in sexual activity, criminal activity, drug use, and gangs starting in early adolescence. Patterns of parent-child alienation often begin at ages eight or nine, when the child's growing grasp of English and knowledge of the American world can create a hiatus between the child and his/her culturally-isolated parents.[12,13,14,15]

Traditional Cambodian child-rearing practices, combined with the stresses inherent in the situation, sometimes result in parent-child interactions that are in conflict with state child abuse laws.[16] Because it was culturally appropriate in Cambodia to physically discipline children, Cambodians tend to use physical punishment as a major aspect of child rearing. This practice sometimes becomes extended and exaggerated under stressful conditions.

One of the cultural factors contributing heavily to the intergenerational tensions is the strong emphasis in Cambodian culture on deference to adult authority. In the traditional Cambodian frame of reference, the parent "knows" about the world and about appropriate behavior. Expression of contradictory ideas or objections by the child is inappropriate. The parent's word is to be accepted by the child without discussion.[17,18,19] To challenge that principle is to challenge the parent's very identity as a caretaker and as a Cambodian.

This deeply-rooted cultural orientation persists in the context of the surrounding American culture which favors more discussion and exchange of perspectives between parent and

child.[20] Further, a high proportion of the Cambodian parents are typically isolated from the American world. Understandably, they do not know much about their new cultural surroundings.

The interaction of three factors contribute to intergenerational tensions: 1) a parental culture that emphasizes absolute parental knowledge and child deference to that knowledge; 2) traditional standards for child behavior which are radically different than those of the host culture; and 3) relative lack of information on the part of many Cambodian parents concerning American culture and society.

In Cambodia, the above described cultural patterns regarding parental authority, child rearing, and child conduct were supported by the extended family, the local community, and the Buddhist temple. These supports, with very few exceptions, do not exist in the American setting.

One can see strong similarities between the difficulties described above and those exhibited by other refugee and immigrant groups of traditional backgrounds. The Cambodian refugees are not totally alone. However, very often they feel alone—socially isolated and misunderstood.

III

THE PROVIDENCE STORY

Empowering Cambodian Parents to Discipline Their Children

Setting and Staff

The Providence "Cambodian Parenting Series" was planned and taught by three key staff members of the Southeast Asian Support Center, St. Joseph Hospital, Providence, Rhode Island. Diane Brousseau Pizzi, coordinator of the Center, orchestrated the planning process. Socheat (Chariya) Hak and Serei Tan, both Cambodian refugee women, played the major roles in conducting the parenting classes. Diane was primarily occupied with caring for young children of participating parents.

The eight classes took place from 10:00 a.m. until noon, once a week, in a spacious and comfortable multi-leveled lecture room within the hospital.

The Parent Participants

A total of 17 Cambodian refugee parents took part in the eight-week program: 11 women and six men. The attendance rate was 12 to 16 parents at each session.

The group included parents from 24 to 65 years old whose children ranged in age from recently born to age 19. Only two couples participated in the group.

Thirteen of the 17 parents were in one-to-one counseling with Diane, Socheat and/or Serei prior to and during the course, having been referred to the Center either for issues surrounding child abuse and neglect or for post-traumatic stress disorder or depression. Staff had previous relationships with most of the other participants through the Cambodian Women's Support Group and Cambodian Men's Support group, also run by these three staff members. Hence, most of the participants had a significant relationship with the instructors prior to the beginning of the series.

A few of the participants were recruited through outside agencies specifically for this course. These participants tended to be the least stable in attendance and the least receptive members of the group. "If we have a prior relationship with them, whether it's the women's group or the men's group or the previous parenting series, they are much more likely to come and follow through the whole series. With the others, with whom we have no prior relationship there is no trust relationship and it's really hard." Lack of regular attendance was one of the biggest problems with these newly-found participants.

Close to 7,000 Cambodian refugees live in Providence. Typical housing is a three-family, three-story apartment building, usually inhabited by several Cambodian families. Inhabitants of neighboring buildings, however, include African Americans and Hispanics. The Cambodian population lives either in the West End of Providence, near the hospital, or in the Smith Hill section, two miles away.

Logistics Surrounding the Course

Before each meeting, staff picked up by car all of the women participants and accompanying children, since, by and large, the women lacked transportation. The men came in their own cars or on foot. Staff telephoned those whom they felt needed to be reminded (about 50%) prior to each class session.

In order to facilitate parent attendance, Diane provided child care for seven children.

Initial Staff Perception of Need

In staff's view, the most manifest problem among the participating parents was "Children who were out of control." "In the families with whom we've been working, the children are controlling the whole household, deciding whether they are going to get up in the morning, whether or not they're going to go to school, following whatever schedule they deem appropriate." Socheat added, "The children have all the power."

The pivotal issue in the staff's view was that "the parents really hadn't learned an effective disciplining method for rearing their children in the United States." Referring to the parents' interpretation of the child abuse laws, staff continues: "They feel that they've been stripped of the one way they know how to discipline, by physically punishing their children and they feel powerless. A lot of the parents have given up trying to control their children, and will often say, 'That's my child's problem now, not mine.'"

The staff's assessment of the need in these particular families was significantly influenced by an experience they had in giving a similar course the previous spring (1991). In planning that earlier course, they already had perceived that ***a lack of discipline*** was the biggest single problem for these families. However, they had underestimated the time and energy it would take to deal with it. "We thought they could handle it in one session."

In planning that earlier course, they had no idea that the parents did not share a number of assumptions that the three instructors took for granted; for example, that in a process of disciplining, "Children have to experience consequences for their behavior. We didn't realize that they didn't understand the idea that rules need to be ***fair***; that a mother and father can't have different rules for the same child, and that the rules can't change from day to day."

Staff also perceived that a major contributor to the parents' lack of systematic discipline was their exhaustion and/or preoccupation. Parents were often physically exhausted from working at several jobs. They also were often depressed, alcoholic, or suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Further, staff felt that the difficulties these families were having in disciplining their children were part of a pattern they had seen in many dysfunctional families from many other culture groups that they had encountered in their work. Diane also noticed that some of these parents seemed to have come from dysfunctional families themselves (based on the clinical data). ***Hence, they were not concluding that this pattern was either unique to Cambodians nor typically Cambodian.*** Yet, at the same time, these families clearly were

Cambodian, with a very distinct set of values and a very special set of issues that Cambodian refugees tend to face. That had to be kept clearly in mind.

The problem between parents and their children was perceived by staff as, in significant degree, a communication issue—"There's plenty of body language and plenty of nonverbal action on both sides, but no one is saying what's in their heart to one another. So parent and child split. The child goes one way, the parent goes the other."

All of this was greatly complicated by the threat of their children joining gangs, stealing, running away, becoming sexually active, and winding up raped, addicted, killed, or jailed.

Staff Goals

Given their perception of the need and their experience with the previous course, the staff's goal for this course was sharply, concretely defined and intentionally limited; namely, for the participating parents to understand that "there is a way to take children who are out of control and to help them learn how to control themselves and their lives and to listen to their parents." A further goal was for the parents to be able to implement that set of ideas and strategies.

A few concepts were pivotal to this understanding: there must be rules for children that are clear, fair, consistent, and enforceable; violations of these rules must be met with negative consequences for the child and adherence to rules met with positive consequences; these rules should reflect the parent's own values and Cambodian heritage.

By the end of the course, the parents should be able to say, "***I think that there are certain things we as Cambodians want to teach our children, that we want them to value in the way that we valued them in Cambodia. In order for us to teach them, we have to live lives in our families that conform to those values. This means that there have to be rules for our children to follow that are important to us in our family.***"

The Plan for the Eight-Session Course

The previous course had been largely topical and informational in design. It had covered a wide-ranging series of subjects to include discipline, safety, parent and teacher roles at school, child abuse/neglect and spouse abuse, alcohol and substance abuse, gambling and its effects on families, dating, arranged marriages, and runaways. Parents had not been asked to do problem solving in relation to their issues with their children.

Staff concluded that the course was relatively ineffective. At the end parents were saying, "Can we come back again, because we still don't know what to do to make our children listen."

Staff felt that the ineffectiveness of the course was due not only to the insufficient coverage of topics, but also to the format as well. A lecture-based, largely didactic format was not going to work, even though that might be what the parents associated with the idea of "school." Staff decided that parents "needed much more time to practice and process the information."

A number of major principles guided the design of the course:

- ***Offer a clear outcome to the parents:*** "We told them that we knew they were having problems with parenting. They told us their children were out of control and they didn't know what to do. So we said, 'If we offer you eight classes on this would you come?' You have to offer them something they feel they need, because if you don't they're not going to come. One of our criteria for parents taking the course was whether the parents acknowledged that they were having problems with their children and whether they recognized that there was a need for change. We wanted them to show that they saw there was a problem and wanted them to do something about it and then make a commitment to the eight classes."
- ***Provide a clear but flexible agenda for the course which allows for major parent input into the particular content of discussions.*** In this case the course theme was set around discipline, but the discussions were built on the problem situations that the parents articulated in the first session or had confirmed from the previous course series.
- ***Teach the course through a problem-solving mode.***
- ***Root the problem solutions in the parents' personally expressed Cambodian values.***
- ***Promote a maximum amount of parental involvement in dialogue, rather than lecturing to them.*** Through their active participation, parents will enjoy the process more, understand more, and provide valuable feedback to the staff regarding how much parents understand.

- At the same time, ***provide enough didactic presentations to give people an opportunity to learn some useful concepts prior to the discussion.***
- ***Build each session on the previous one,*** starting with a careful review of the ideas covered in the previous sessions and joining the new material with the former material. Each time, take the review all the way back to the beginning of the course, rather than simply reviewing the previous session.
- ***Be sure that the staff is consistent in the use of Cambodian terms for the concepts being taught, to avoid confusion for the parents.***
- ***Frequently switch the leadership roles between the instructors during the class session in order to provide variety and freshness to the parents;*** for example, one instructor covers the review about one aspect of the past sessions and another reviews another aspect of the previous work.

Each session lasted two hours. The sequence of eight sessions was as follows:

I. **INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM: parenting problems of Cambodians**

II. **DISCIPLINING CHILDREN: family rules that are clear, fair, and consistent**

III. **DISCIPLINING CHILDREN: making sure children follow the rules**

IV. **DISCIPLINING CHILDREN: consequences for children of following or not following the rules**

V. **PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS—teaching children to value their culture and beliefs**

VI. **FAMILY COMMUNICATION**

VII. **INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES**

VIII. **EVALUATION AND CELEBRATION**

SESSION I

Introduction to Program: Parenting Problems of Cambodians

- **Logistics**

Staff arranged the chairs in a circle. They had concluded from the first course that when they arranged parents in rows (audience fashion, facing the instructors), the parents were less likely to communicate with each other during discussion time and more likely to be whispering about each other during lecturing time. With parents physically facing each other in a circle, concentration and communication were improved. The instructors were also in the circle and, hence, were more a part of the group. Consequently, the parents felt more comfortable about sharing their feelings.

As part of the introductory comments, staff asked the parents to be respectful to each other and not talk while others were speaking (addressing a problem that had arisen in the previous course series).

After reviewing the purpose of the course, staff asked the parents, "You told us you were having problems with your children. Tell us what those problems are. That's what we're going to work on for eight weeks." Staff was surprised to find parents saying, "We don't have problems; our children have the problems. They are the ones who have to change."

In response, staff re-formulated the question: "Okay, if it is your children who have the problems, let's look at the problems they are having and talk about how we could change that in your children. What are the things that your children are doing that you would like to see changed?" By

answering the parents' position diplomatically, the instructors were able to ward off a confrontation and help the parents own their role as teachers of their children.

To get the parents started, the instructors had made a list of the child behavior problems mentioned by parents in the previous course series. "This is what the last group said. Do you recognize any of these?" Staff presented five categories of problematic behaviors: children don't want to listen to parents; children act out; children spend too much time being entertained by TV and videos; children have difficulties with school work due to language/cultural barriers; and married children don't get along with their spouses and this causes family problems.

The parents said that they were in fact encountering all of these child behavior problems and added more to the list: children skip school; children dress inappropriately for the winter; children are too active—it's difficult to watch them all the time; children sneak out of the house and go to the store to steal things; children take flowers and fruit from public places and parks; children won't obey parents—if parents tell the child not to go out, they go out anyway; the children are stubborn; children fight with their siblings; boys pierce their ears.

- **Post-session reflection by staff**

The parental refusal to take responsibility for their children's behavior was reminiscent of a pattern that emerged in the previous course series. At that time, a few parents had said that their children were simply "bad seeds," difficult from birth. Staff noted that this pattern commonly turns up among highly-stressed families in many other ethnic groups

as well. It has to do with particular children and the experience of the parent not being able to do anything about the child's behavior. In the Cambodian case, this position is often expressed by the parent saying to the child, "You're not my child," and taking the position, "I don't want this child anymore. Take him away. Let him go someplace else."

In this course, the parents were not taking as extreme a position. With one exception, the parents basically could not accept the idea that their child's current behavior was in any way a product of their past parenting. However, they were able to take the position that they could do something to affect the child's behavior in the here and now. The parents seemed ready to look at ways to solve the problems of their children.

■ SESSION II

Disciplining Children: Family Rules That Are Clear, Fair, and Consistent

• Presentation and Discussion

Socheat discussed the concept of "discipline," using the Khmer word, *san dap tnap*. As applied to a household, the term refers to a family that is orderly and well-organized both physically and socially. There are clear times of day for getting up and going to bed, meals, and other activities. There is clear hierarchy in family relations; respect is paid to parents and other elders. Children are well behaved, respectful to guests, and respectful to adults outside the home. As such, they are seen by outsiders as a general manifestation of the state of *san dap tnap* in the family. The concept also includes the moral behavior of family members. Socheat

recounted to the parents the humorous story her mother had told her as a child about a girl that was not *san dap tnap. **One day the girl sat on a chair and some tape that was on the chair stuck to her rear. When she got up the tape went with her as she walked, sticking to her backside.***

The parents said that for them the core issue in *san dap tnap* was to ***make the children listen.*** They added that this was hard in the U.S., since they are not allowed to physically discipline the children.

Socheat presented the idea of "family rules that are clear, fair, and consistent," giving examples and counter-examples. She asked the parents to think of rules they had at home, to describe rules for their children in their home that she could actually write down on the newsprint.

The parents did not grasp at first that they actually had rules in their families. They said that they could not think of any. Socheat approached this difficulty by asking them how their own parents had kept them out of trouble when they were children. Then the parents could think of examples of family rules: e.g., "My parents would not let me go out at night," "My parents told me I must come home after school."

As the recall of past experience led to a discussion of rules that the parents currently had for their own children, Socheat found that the rules that the parents were making at home were not ***clear.*** For example, the rule was to "come home after school," but no specific time was given. Some of the rules were not ***fair,*** such as the rule that the child could not sleep anywhere outside the house. This would prevent the child from sleeping at her grandmother's house. Another rule that seemed unfair was that the daughter had to stay

home after school and do housework while the son was allowed to go out and play soccer.

Socheat then spoke of rules as being related to values. She asked the parents to list the values of Cambodian culture that were important to them. The parents responded with a list of universal values: "***Not lying, not slandering one's neighbor, not stealing, not coveting another's wife or husband, not killing, and giving proper respect to adults and to Buddhist temples and traditions.***"

Socheat then moved the group into a discussion of how to translate some of those values into rules; e.g., "If the value that you want to impart to your child is no stealing, then there has to be a rule in your house about that."

She then asked the parents to each create a rule that was important to them. In their discussion of values, some parents had been objecting to their girls dyeing their hair with blond or pink streaks. For one thing, this practice was gang-connected. So they made up a rule: "One may dye his or her hair only the color with which one was born." Other parents wanted their children to practice the traditional Cambodian greeting. Still other parents were concerned that their children show proper manners at the Buddhist temple. The group generated rules for all of these.

As rules were created Socheat sometimes took these opportunities to discuss the ideas of ***fair, clear, and consistent.*** She found that the parents were able to understand the concept of "***clear***" rules, but they had more difficulty with the concepts of "***fair***" and "***consistent.***"

- **Parent evaluation at the end of the session**

A number of parents told Socheat that the class was very useful; most specifically, that making rules was very useful. One mother said she knew that what she learned was correct, but she did not know if she could implement it. Another said, "We never thought of rules before."

- **Post-session reflection by staff**

The plan for this session had been to have the parents translate their felt problems with their children into rules, and then to apply the principles of ***clear, fair, and consistent*** to the newly-formed rules. Socheat felt she had spoken too much herself. She wanted the parents to talk more. She had begun the process of translating values and problems into rules, but it had not gone far enough.

■ SESSION III

Disciplining Children: Making Sure Children Follow the Rules

- **Review**

At the end of the previous session (II), the parents had been given a homework assignment to make up some rules for their children that were fair, clear, consistent. None did it. So staff involved parents in this process during the review session, choosing problems from the list that had been generated in Session I. The group still had difficulty grasping the concepts of "***fair***" and "***consistent.***"

- **Presentation**

Serei told the parents that age three onwards is the right age for making rules and discussed the importance of making rules that are age appropriate. After some discussion of this,

Socheat introduced the idea of properly enforcing rules. She gave the example of a parent who is up gambling all night and is not ready to get up and see to it that the children leave for school. The parents laughed about this and agreed that it was a genuine situation. On the subject of enforcement, Serei discussed the idea of "Give a command only once;" for example, a small child tries to reach for a plant and the parent says, "Don't do that." But the parent is watching TV and does not follow up on the order given to the child. The child continues to reach for the plant and finally the entire pot falls off the table.

As an overview to the subject of enforcement, staff stated that parents need to have energy to enforce rules, that ***parents must take care of themselves first if they are to be able to be effective in discipline.*** If they are feeling overwhelmed, they need to seek help for that general condition before they can have the will and energy to create and enforce rules. The parent must be home and awake to enforce the rules. If they are away or sleeping during the day after a night of gambling or drinking, they will not be able to enforce discipline. Finally, rules must be enforced immediately when they are broken.

■ SESSION IV

Disciplining Children: Consequences for Children of Following or Not Following the Rules

- **Review**

Parents again had been given the homework of practicing and enforcing one rule at home. One family had done this and reported a very positive experience to the group. The in-

structors then reviewed the steps of making rules, making sure they are clear, fair, and consistent and asking parents how they might see to it that such rules are enforced.

- **Presentation and discussion**

Staff introduced the topic of "Consequences" by posing the question, "What happens if your children follow the rules? If they do not follow the rules?" They first asked parents to remember examples of consequences experienced in their own childhood. Parents mentioned being hit, pinched, and having their ear twisted. One parent mentioned being made to carry water.

A mother reported that the rule she made for her four-year-old girl did not work. The rule was that the child must not jump on the mattress. However, the mother did not follow through with any consequences. When the child jumped on the mattress, the mother told her if she did it again she would hit her, but did not follow through. Staff asked the group if they thought the rule was clear, fair, and consistent. As it turned out in the discussion, this rule was set only for the 4-year-old child and not for the other children. The group decided that the rule was not fair.

Another parent gave an account of having a rule that the child must come home on time from school. When the child did not, the mother told the child to stand on one leg near the door for a half hour. The next day the child again did not come home after school. The mother increased the one leg consequence to a full hour.

Staff then went on to present the idea that ***the consequences had to be age appropriate, directly related to the behavior,***

and reasonable. Parents needed to make sure that consequences actually occur; not just say this or that is going to happen.

Staff then introduced the importance of positive consequences for children respecting the rules. Parents gave examples of buying new clothes or shoes for a child or giving praise.

Homework assignment: set a rule and provide positive and negative consequences where appropriate.

■ SESSION V

Parents as Role Models: Teaching Children to Value Their Culture and Beliefs

The goal of this session was to communicate the importance of setting a good example for children.

- **Review**

Staff engaged the parents in a discussion of the parenting skills learned in previous sessions. The parents had difficulty remembering how to make rules in response to problems. Nevertheless, they had been getting better with each review on this score. The group discussed a rule created by one of the participants to regulate his son's television viewing. The rule was to go to bed at 9:00 p.m. The class decided that the rule was not ***clear*** because it did not specify whether it applied to all seven days of the week. They decided it was unfair because it was suddenly imposed without any warning and without any explanation of what consequences would follow its infraction. Finally, the father never actually imposed any consequences for breaking the rule.

- **Presentation and discussion**

Staff reviewed with the parents some of their most important Cambodian cultural values. Parents listed, among other things, being honest, not killing, not stealing, not taking another person's wife or husband, being kind, telling the truth, not talking badly about others. Staff pointed out that children do what they see their elders doing. Hence, ***role modeling for children is of the greatest importance***. Parents agreed that their behavior set patterns for their children. The children even imitate the way the parents cook. One parent mentioned that parents ask their kids to brush their teeth every day, but often the same parents don't brush their own teeth.

To extend this discussion, the parents were presented with "projective story telling cards." The parents were asked to discuss what kind of behavior the parent in the picture was modelling for the child—what the child was learning from the parent in this picture (Projection Story Telling Cards #87-A12, Minority set. These cards are available from Northwest Psychological Publishers, Inc. P.O. Box 494958, Reading, California, 96049-4958. Tel: 916-223-4735).

- **Staff reflection on the session**

Staff felt the review period was starting to get so long that it crowded the rest of the session. A clear imbalance was taking place. They felt they would have been more successful with the father and the TV rule if Socheat and Serei had role-played it. Serei pointed out that this family cannot think abstractly and, hence, the role-playing approach would have been particularly desirable in this case.

The session had very good parent participation. The projection cards worked well. There was much laughter and giggling. Staff ran out of time to complete the use of the cards.

The persistence of the parents' difficulty with making rules in relation to problems during the review session confirmed to staff the wisdom of focusing the bulk of the course on discipline.

■ SESSION VI
Family Communication

- **Review**

The review, as usual, was centered on problem-solving activity which would rehearse the concepts of the course covered thus far. Staff consulted the problem list that was generated by the parents at the first session. They chose the wayward child—the child who was not going to school, not listening, coming home in the middle of the night or not at all. Staff explained that when this happens they look for an agency to help.

- **Presentation and discussion**

Serei and Socheat defined "family communication" in three parts. The first meaning is "messages we give to other members of the family through what we do and say." To articulate this, they role-played a child coming home with her report card. Serei, playing the child, comes in with a piece of paper and says, "Look! I got all A's." Socheat, role-playing the mother, smiles slightly and says "Okay," without looking at the card and without further comment.

The second meaning of family communication is presented as "what we do not do and do not say." In this role play, the child presents the report card as before, and the mother turns away without comment and then throws the child's report card away.

The third meaning was "what we say through our body language." Serei plays a husband and Socheat the wife. They explain that the husband comes home at 12:00 midnight and the wife is waiting, pretending to be sewing. The husband walks in and says, "Hi, honey. I'm home." The wife says nothing in response. The husband asks, "You have anything for me to eat," and the wife just walks off without responding. The wife reflects a lot of anger in her posture. The group had been laughing greatly at this final episode. Staff asked them, "What do you think about this one?" Many said things like, "It sounds like my story at home," and explained that was why they were laughing so much.

Staff explained, "We are often not aware of what we communicate through our silence and our body language." They brought out the projection picture cards that they had used in the previous session. This time they asked, "What is being communicated in these pictures?" They added, "There is no right or wrong in these pictures nor in your answers. Just look at how it seems that they are behaving to each other." For the first picture, a parent answered, "It looks like she is very angry." The parents were having difficulty with this sort of interpretation of body language. To help them, staff role-played some of the subsequent pictures in the set. The role play helped the parents to see the pictures, but they still had considerable difficulty inferring meanings in the interactions.

After the break, staff asked the parents a series of questions intended to stimulate discussion. "How do we communicate in our families? How do we, in our families, know that we are happy, mad, or fearful? How do we communicate love to husband, wife, and children?" Parents talked about showing care by giving the children clothes or shoes or serving nice meals to the husband and taking care of him when he is sick. Staff asked parents how they show affection to each of their children, and some said it was difficult to show affection to all of their children.

How do we know if our children are unhappy or in trouble? How do you communicate with your children when they are sad? How do you know if a child is sick or has a headache? Parents did not give a response to these questions. How do we know how our children are doing in school? Parents said things like, "I know by asking them where is their homework, or they show me their report card."

- **Staff reflection on the class process**

Staff concluded that the questioning method they had used towards the end of class was not working well. Serei felt exhausted. Diane said, "I don't think the parents felt good about it." The parents were not able to give responses to many of the questions. Serei felt that the parents had difficulty responding because they do not readily notice or perhaps were not accustomed to thinking or talking about the behaviors and affective states of family members.

Staff noted that the parents truly enjoyed and connected with the role play at the beginning of the session and explored the idea of making role play, in person or on video tape, the focus of the whole session.

SESSION VII

Intergenerational Issues

- **Review**

Staff reviewed the concepts of clear, fair, and consistent rules once more. The parents seemed to understand these concepts reasonably well by now. Staff found that parents could most clearly remember and discuss these concepts when someone brought up a negative example; i.e. a rule that was not clear, fair and consistent. They also understood the necessity of changing rules that did not fit these standards. The parents as a group also were able to suggest a considerable number of consequences for rule breaking that did not involve hitting the child; e.g., not giving a child what he/she wants or having the child stand on one foot for 15 minutes.

Only a few parents could remember the topic of the previous class on family communication. After being reminded of the topic, parents could recall a variety of modes of interpersonal communication that had been discussed; e.g., body language, talking, and writing.

- **Presentation**

Serei and Socheat presented the overall concept of "intergenerational issues." They dealt with the terms "generation" and "issue" and brought in examples. The parents seemed to understand well. It was the very reason they had subscribed to the class. A video tape, in English, was shown depicting intergenerational conflicts in a Cambodian refugee family.

The session was shortened by the presence of the project evaluator who administered a group questionnaire to the class.

- **Staff reflection on the session**

Staff felt frustrated by the shortness of the session. In addition, they concluded that showing a video tape in the English language is probably of little use to the parents.

■ SESSION VIII

Evaluation and Celebration

- **Review**

As suspected, the parents were not able to profit from seeing the video the previous week because it was in English. They had missed the messages regarding intergenerational conflict.

- **Presentation**

Staff re-introduced the topic of intergenerational conflict and the parents affirmed its importance for them. They went on to say, however, that in spite of the conflicts with their children, they think it is important to maintain the values of their culture. In the context of intergenerational issues, this meant no dating and it meant adhering to culturally-appropriate marriages. Many felt that if a child insisted on dating or refused to get married in the appropriate way, the child should be asked to move out of the household.

Staff told the parents about the Cambodian dance drama called "Man-Woman." The story is similar to Romeo and Juliet. Caught in the conflict between their families, both lovers die in the end. Staff used the example to draw the parents' attention to the dangers of forced marriages. They stressed the alternative of talking with children about their choice of marriage partners and felt that the parents understood. None of the parents insisted upon the institution of ar-

ranged marriages. This apparently had been a major accommodation to their new situation.

- **Evaluation**

In a brief evaluation of the eight-week sequence, staff sought spontaneous statements from the parents on what they felt they had learned in the course.

Many of the parents mentioned that they had learned a great deal about making rules for their children and how important this was in helping their children. They also said they had learned about how to get outside help when needed.

- **Staff Assessment of the Eight-Week Sequence**

The review process at the beginning of each session was affirmed as a highly-important component in the overall method. "***For people who have no education, if you don't specify the problem, they don't know how to apply the ideas. They learn about rules but they don't know how to connect rules to problems.***"

Staff concluded that in conducting the review it is not usually effective to ask parents what they learned at the previous session. This often draws a blank. Instead, if one mentions a few things about the previous session, the parents begin to talk about it and one finds that a considerable amount of learning had in fact taken place. The major problem that remained with the reviews was their increasing demand on time as the sessions progressed. By the fifth session, the review was taking nearly an hour, as staff tried to cover all the material learned to date. The great time demands of the reviews was unexpected. One suggestion was to devote an entire session to review about half way through the course, in order to put less review pressure on each session.

The decision to treat far fewer topics than had been treated in the spring session was judged to be a good one. Go narrow and deep. "***Less is more. Keep the agenda really tight.***" The three sessions on discipline were felt to be barely enough, however. Parents needed more practice in developing rules in response to problems, and there was definitely not enough time devoted to the issue of positive and negative consequences. Staff reflected that "they still don't know how to punish children without hitting them."

Further, there should have been much more time devoted to the final two topics of family communication and intergenerational issues. Because these two topics are so vitally connected to issues of discipline and to the most pressing issues that parents were experiencing with their children, the topics needed to be retained and treated more fully.

An obvious solution to the strong time pressures would be to add on a modest number of additional class sessions. Staff felt that ten sessions might be an optimal number. More than that would create an awkward time commitment for both the parents and the staff.

Serei and Sockeat's decision to standardize their use of Khmer terms had been an important one. However, a language problem still existed. They found that because of educational and/or regional differences the terms they used were often not familiar to the parents. To deal with this, staff frequently asked parents to repeat things back to them. In this manner they could check to see how well they had communicated and how much the parents had grasped. They also needed to confine their vocabulary to approximately the third-grade level.

Focusing on the parents' own stated problems had been an effective approach. Staff found that when they were initially teaching a concept, they tended to use types of problems that they had remembered from their clinical one-to-one work with parents. In the review sessions, they tended to utilize problems from the group's own list.

The role playing was by far the most powerful teaching technique and should be further explored and expanded in a new series.

Staff felt that one reason the course was successful was its emphasis on peer challenging peer. For example, if a parent says, "The neighborhood is bad. That's why my children are bad," other parents would respond, "Well, I live in the same street as you and my children listen." Diane replied: "That's exactly why group therapy is so effective. Because it's peer challenging peer. There are some ideas one will take from a peer but not from a therapist."

- **Other Points**

The bilingual staff was careful in the choice of words they used in describing their relationship to the parents. They used the Khmer word for "teach" and said their role was "to help you understand your children and to teach you how to discipline your children." They avoided the word "advise." "It would be insulting for us to 'advise' them. If we advise them that suggests that they need advice. You 'advise' children but you do not 'advise' parents. When we say 'advise' that makes them feel like they are little or small like children."

On the selection of bilingual staff: both staff have finished college and have experience working in the United States.

Equally important, they both have good reputations in the Cambodian community. There is a Cambodian saying, "If your shirt is dirty don't tell your children that theirs should be clean." This idea applied as well to the class session on parents as role models (Session V).

The planning requirements for the course were two hours per outline, plus the time required for debriefing after each session.

"...the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community."

(Preamble, U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child) 1989, U.N.

Bante Srei temple, located in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia

UN Photo/159713/J. Isaac

IV

THE TACOMA STORY

Helping Parents and Children Understand Each Other in Their New Life in the United States

"They (the parents) need to bend like a river"
–Hoeun Voeuk

Setting and Staff

The Tacoma, Washington "Khmer Parent Support Group" was planned and taught by Julianne Duncan, Lutheran Social Services (Seattle), Hoeun Voeuk, Catholic Community Services (Tacoma), and Savis Ngo, also of Catholic Community Services (Tacoma). Julianne was the director of the project. As a rule, all three leaders were present at every session.

The combination of two Cambodians and an American as group leaders keenly fit one of the main goals of the project: to provide a bridge that will help Cambodian families understand and adapt to American society and culture. An intent was for each leader to have a particular legitimacy in the eyes of the parents—Julianne as a qualified source of information on the American reality which surrounded them, Hoeun (man) and Savis (woman) as seasoned and well-educated Cambodian social service workers. All three staff were parents in their own private lives.

The classes took place in October and November of 1991, weekly from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., in the Indochinese Cultural and Services Center, located in the Salishan housing project in Tacoma.

The Parent Participants

Most of the 27 parents in the group were residents of the Salishan housing project, which they shared with other ethnic groups. A few participants lived in the vicinity of the project. They came from a mix of regional and educational backgrounds in Cambodia, with roughly ten being able to read in Khmer. Most of the parents had teenage children; these were the major source of their parent-child problems. The younger children of these families (below the middle-school age) by and large did not present a problem to these parents. For the most part, the parents did not have pre-existing relationships with others in the group. Together they represented a total of 21 families. The average attendance at class sessions was fifteen.

Recruitment

Unlike the other two programs, the participants at Tacoma were not recruited through pre-existing counseling relationships with the course leaders. A brochure, in Cambodian and English, was prepared to describe the course and its sequence of eight weekly classes as well as the dates, location, and sponsoring agencies. The purpose of the course was presented as follows: "To help parents and teenagers understand each other in their new life in the U.S."

The Tacoma project differed from the Providence and Bronx projects in not having a clinic population with which the project instructors had previous counseling relationships. In Tacoma, two recruitment strategies were employed. The first involved sending the brochure to a spectrum of social service agencies serving the Cambodian population of Tacoma. Each mailing was followed up by a phone call. This strategy was eminently unsuccessful. Not one participant could be recruited in this fashion.

The second strategy was described by the project staff as "The Cambodian Network." This strategy proved to be highly effective. The two Cambodian instructors, Hoeun and Savis, placed brochures in grocery stores and other public settings serving the Cambodian population.

Even more importantly, they communicated to Cambodian friends and acquaintances that they were looking for families who were having "problems with their children" and "wanted to join a Cambodian family support group." Some of the friends and acquaintances worked in the public schools, as case workers in public welfare, or as nurses in public clinics. Savis herself worked as a translator and administrator in the office of a Vietnamese doctor. This connection proved to be a major resource for spotting and recruiting parent participants.

Julianne concluded that the personal and professional social network of the Cambodian instructors was essential to successful recruitment. Recruiting "cold" is likely to be an uphill process. One is asking Cambodian parents who have no experience with this kind of group to risk taking part in a

process that could expose their most painful family secrets and to give up valuable working time as well.

Logistics Surrounding the Course

All through the project, staff called each participant the night before each class and picked up the participants in a van prior to each meeting. Two such van runs were required, the first starting at about 5:15 p.m. This overall process leading up to each meeting was an integral part of the program itself. Julianne commented, "Especially in the beginning classes, people were reluctant because they did not know what they were getting into. They were shy to come. They didn't know about this. They didn't see whether it was going to be helpful to them. They were concerned about walking through the projects in the dark. So they had little or no motivation for getting here. For sure, in the beginning, you were going to have to bring them. Later on, it began to be like a sort of way that the teachers showed that they cared about people."

The van rides proved to be an opportunity to strengthen relationships and to show caring for the participants; they also provided a context for talking informally about some of the key issues that were being discussed in the classes; for example, the importance of communication with children.

Although many of the participants had younger children for whom care was needed while the parent attended the meetings, the staff felt it was best to let the parents work out their own way of meeting these needs. At first, very few parents brought their children to the meeting. Then the attendance of children increased until, on a particular occasion, the children caused a major disturbance during the meeting.

After that, fewer parents brought children and most seemed to meet the need through other means.

The Initial Staff Perception of Need

- The project staff estimated that roughly 35-40% of the Cambodian parents in the community were having highly stressful and painful relations with their adolescent children. These often erupted into children running away and/or becoming involved with gangs, alcohol, and drugs.
- Many of the Cambodian refugee parents lacked information about their American social and cultural surroundings; for example, information about child abuse laws or relevant issues like dating patterns and other norms regarding adolescent behavior.
- Cambodian parents tended to feel put down, perceived as "bad" by the surrounding society. In Julianne's words, "When they come to the U.S. their competence is taken away. In their view, the law (child abuse law) says that what Cambodian refugees know about raising children is wrong and what they do is bad—and they believe that Americans are saying that what they believe is wrong and what they do is bad."
- Many or most of the parents strongly wanted their children to behave according to the same norms that they followed as children in Cambodia. Further, many lost face in the eyes of their Cambodian refugee neighbors when their children behaved in ways contrary to those values. Children running away resulted in the most acutely painful loss of face and tended to make parents an object of public ridicule in the Cambodian community.

- A high proportion of families having problems with their children were ones in which parents are involved in gambling, alcohol, and, in some cases, drugs. These preoccupations constituted drains on family resources that served to severely erode the parents' commitment to their children and their effectiveness as positive role models.

- Parents are not open to communication with their children. For one thing, in the traditional definition of parent-child relations, the parent is to be the source of unquestioned knowledge and authority. In such a framework, there is little place for discussion. The child's particular adaptive issues and emotional needs are eclipsed by the emphasis placed on the parent's role as transmitter of traditional beliefs, norms, and authority.

Staff Goals for Parents

- ***Prevention:*** The staff's overall emphasis was "prevention" of disintegration in parent-child relationships. This was embodied in the message to parents that "If we don't brake now, the car will roll down hill, all the way to the bottom." Another metaphor used by the teachers was the Cambodian "fence building" proverb: "Build a fence before the dogs and wild animals come running into your house." These images served as major organizers for many of the teacher's messages to parents.

- ***"To bend like a river":*** A pivotal element in the prevention process was staff's feeling that the parents needed to become more attuned to the social and cultural surroundings of American society, especially the norms and values governing adolescent and parental behavior. Staff believed

that without this knowledge of key facets of American culture and without a willingness to shift their parental values, practices, and expectations somewhat in the direction of those American norms, parents were doomed to a very high rate of stress in their relationships with their adolescent children. Hence, the goal of "bending like a river;" i.e., flexibly adapting to the surrounding landscape. Some of the key areas in which parents need to "bend" are dating, religion, and the importance of communicating with and listening to children. While realizing the great importance of this need for parents to bend, the staff was also aware of the difficulties involved in getting parents to embrace it.

- ***A more orderly life with their children:*** This includes the following: orderly family life from an early age; consistency of parental behavior towards their children; doing what they say they will do and consistently enforcing rules; consistency in the nurturance of children; physical order in the home and an orderly unfolding of the day.

- ***Communication:*** Parents need to be more available to communicate with their children and listen to their children's concerns, needs, and problems.

- ***Willingness to alter addictions:*** A sensitive yet essential goal was for parents to recognize that addictive gambling, alcohol, and drug abuse contribute to severe stress in relations with adolescent children and make it impossible for them to achieve the goals outlined above. Correspondingly, a willingness to change these behaviors is important.

- ***Parental self esteem:*** This stemmed from Julianne's observation that Cambodian parents tend to believe that

Americans define them as "bad." Julianne stated, "One of my main goals is to give back to people a sense that they are good, that their efforts to try to help their children are good." This sense of parental self esteem is essential to provide an overall inner climate for any significant degree of parental growth. In fostering that sense of self esteem, the teachers also are modelling behaviors for parents to carry out with their children, "Positive, positive, positive."

- *Mutual support in the group:* In the course, staff continually emphasized the importance of the group members' giving support to each other. Trust and support within the group would be essential to parental willingness to share and to their self esteem. Support within the group would also provide a great service to parents who had already essentially lost their older teenage children to gangs, drugs, alcohol, and crime—who had come to the group too late for "prevention" and now needed empathy, understanding, and new coping skills.

The Plan for the Eight-Week Session

Preliminary Planning

Preparation for the course involved six planning sessions of several hours each.

Principles Governing the Design and Implementation of the Course

- A major focus on discussion of differences between American and Cambodian cultures as a basic building block of the course.

- Significant use of audio-visual presentation, in the form of video clips prepared in the Cambodian language especially for the course (Sessions I, III, IV, V, and VI). The video presentations were prepared by the teachers along with help from members of the Cambodian community, including parents who later participated in the course, and gang members.
- Careful attention to the state child abuse law—examination of the details of this law as well as its specific implementation by state and local governments. This had been a major area of misunderstanding and concern on the part of the participants.
- Fostering experiences of fun, fellowship, and pleasure in a relaxing environment.
- Emphasis on development of trust and support within the group.
- Never putting parents on the spot by asking them directly to talk about their problems, but frequently providing space for them to talk about their problems if they wish.
- A structure for the class sessions which is repeated for each session and, hence, becomes familiar and comfortable to the participants.

Structure of the Individual Sessions

After the two introductory classes (I and II), sessions III-VII followed a specific structure which was repeated each time:

- ***Presentation:*** Staff presented the issues of the session. For example, in Session IV, Hoeun discussed the presence of alcoholism and gambling in the Cambodian

community and the effects that these have on family life.

- *Video:* Video clip was shown that dramatically portrayed the issues that had been discussed in the presentation. e.g., a man comes home drunk and engages in a lengthy fight with his wife. Their teenage son witnesses this frequently-enacted occurrence and in a depressed and desperate mood, runs away from home.
- *Suggestion of alternatives to the video scenario:* Staff suggested alternatives to the scenario; i.e., suggestions as to how to prevent the outcomes portrayed in the story.
- *Discussion:* Parents discussed the issues, including alternative courses of action. The discussion was stimulated by questions such as, "What suggestions do you have for parents in general who might be experiencing these problems," or, "Do you have any ideas about how to support parents who are in this kind of situation," or, "How would you support each other if you were in this kind of situation?" If parents remained silent, staff reformulated the question in a still hypothetical but more immediate form, such as, "If you had a child run away, what would you do?" The rule of thumb, however, was to keep the discussion at a hypothetical level, always allowing for parents to bring in stories that they have heard about others or aspects of their own problems. Parents were never asked directly to volunteer accounts of their own issues.

Course Sequence

(as it was actually carried out, October 3 through November 22, 1991):

I.	**INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM: discussion of problems**
II.	**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CAMBODIAN AND AMERICAN CULTURES**
III.	**DATING AND ARRANGED MARRIAGE**
IV.	**GAMBLING AND ALCOHOL ABUSE**
V.	**GANGS**
VI.	**RUNAWAYS**
VII.	**CHILD ABUSE LAW**
VIII.	**PARTY, EVALUATION, AND AWARD OF CERTIFICATES**

■ SESSION I

Introduction to Program: Discussion of Problems

- **Presentation**

Hoeun gave a general overview of the course, including the importance of prevention along with the associated concepts of "Brake the car before it rolls down the hill" and "Fix the fence before the dogs and wild animals come into the house" (see Staff Goals above). He gave a brief introduction to each of the topics to be covered in the course and discussed the ideal of people supporting each other in the group.

The spirit of this presentation was to say that "Cambodian families in America are experiencing a lot of problems. How do we solve these problems? How do we prevent them and protect our children?" Hoeun added that all people have trouble with their children, that nobody in the room is alone. "Americans try to solve their problems by joining together and supporting each other, and that is what we are trying to do in this group." Finally, Hoeun stated that the parents might want to ask about problems in class, or at other times they might choose to talk individually with one of the teachers.

- **Video**

The entire video tape was shown to the parents, including the sequences on dating, gambling, alcoholism, and gangs.

- **Discussion**

The parents reiterated many of the problems presented thus far, saying that Cambodians need help right now. They thought they were coming to the United States to have peace, but it is not that way. They have lost everything: their language, their culture, and their children. Often the group would respond with collective "yeah's" in response to these statements. Several people gave speeches of gratitude to the three teachers for their help and to the International Catholic Child Bureau for its support.

■ SESSION II

Differences between Cambodian and American Cultures

- **Presentation**

Hoeun spoke about Cambodian culture and what it was like when they were all young—discipline, religion, the impor-

tant role of the school and of community elders in disciplining the child, and how the society as a whole helped the parents by keeping an eye on the child, administering discipline, communicating expectations. He spoke of customs of modesty, tight control in relations between boys and girls, and arranged marriages.

Julianne talked about American culture with Savis serving as translator. She spoke in general about marriage and relations between parents and children, emphasizing that the most important idea in raising children was "independence." Even when children are very small, parents expect them to make decisions. By the time they are 13 or 14, they are used to making many independent decisions.

Parents in the United States tend to exercise control more indirectly than in Cambodian culture. They often exercise control by engaging a child in conversation in which they elicit the child's ideas about something that the child has experienced and inject their own ideas in the discussion indirectly by leading the child to come to the parent's own point of view.

- **Discussion**

Someone voiced concern about elderly parents not being cared for in American culture, and how did that fit in with everything that Julianne had said?

Some parents raised the painful issue of the American child abuse laws and how they wanted to change them. They believed that the law forbade them to spank their children under any circumstances and that the authorities backed that up with fines, arrest, and imprisonment, and fines. They felt that as a result they could not properly exercise their respon-

sibility to discipline their children and that their children look down on them. They told stories of parents who were arrested or reported by teachers for administering the traditional "coining" cure to their children for colds and coughs.

- **Post-session reflection by staff**

Staff felt that the parents were still very reticent to speak about personal issues. They did not fully trust the staff or the group yet.

SESSION III
Dating and Arranged Marriage

- **Presentation**

Staff reported that they had established a special discussion group for Cambodian adolescents. Some of the participants were children of the parents in the course. The parents were surprised about many of the things the children had said in the group; they really did not know how the children felt.

Staff told them that young people often felt that their parents did not really care about them. "When we talk to our parents they shut us off and don't want to hear from us. When we ask our parents to buy something, they always say 'No..I have no money,' without any further explanation." They said that when they came home after school the parent was not there. Some of the children explained that they had run away because they wanted to know what the "real world" was like.

Julianne then spoke about "dating" among American teenagers and how American parents expect boys and girls to date a good deal before they choose someone to marry. She said that the parents valued the practice of their girls and

boys dating many different people since it gave them experience for the process of picking a husband or wife. She said it was expected that children would leave home between the ages of 18 and 25, and that when the child decided on a marriage partner, they would come home and tell the parents of their decision.

- **Parents' questions**

The questions that the parents posed about Julianne's description of "dating" suggested to her that they really did not believe what she had said about it. The ideas were too strange to be real to them. The parents were especially astounded and disbelieving about the report that American parents actually valued their daughters "getting to know a lot of men." It was so fully contradictory to their own deepest beliefs that it could not be believed.

- **Video**

Parent participants viewed the "dating" sequence. A Cambodian girl waits for her parents to leave the house and then phones her boyfriend. The boyfriend picks her up promptly and they drive to the local mall. While at the mall, they are holding hands and hugging in a full body, standing-up posture. It so happens that the parents of the girl have come to the same mall to do their shopping. They witness their daughter hugging the boy. The father runs over to the couple and creates an angry public scene while the mother tries to hold the father back.

- **Staff presentation of alternatives**

Staff presented an alternative of discussing the matter privately at home rather than creating a scene in public where everyone loses face. Invite the boyfriend to your home and

also get to know his parents. Do not automatically say that every boyfriend or girlfriend is bad. You have to "bend like the river" around this American custom since your children learn from American schools.

- **Discussion**

The parents could not believe that this could possibly be acceptable behavior in the United States. But everyone agreed that the father should control his behavior in public because "he is old enough and has education." However, his anger was considered to be correct behavior, showing that he cared about his daughter. No one could imagine a scenario in which the daughter's behavior was okay. The culture gap could not be bridged here. The Cambodian staff also said that they did not want their children to do this. They could not believe that Julianne would allow her 20-year-old son to behave in this manner.

■ SESSION IV
Gambling and Alcohol Abuse

- **Presentation**

Hoeun presented some perceptions on alcohol and gambling problems among Cambodian refugees and the effects that these addictions have on family life.

- **Video**

Gambling video—This scenario involves a mother and her 18-year-old daughter. The characters in the video were played by Savis and her daughter. The mother is on the phone with the grocer. She is trying to get the grocer to give her food on credit since she is out of money. "I just lost $200 today," she says. "I have to borrow $50 from you." Fol-

lowing the phone conversation, a heated conversation ensues between mother and daughter in which the mother finally tells the daughter that she ought to get married so that the mother can get the marriage money from the groom's family, presumably to use on gambling. The message is that her gambling addiction has totally corrupted her relationship with her daughter. Feeling alienated and alone, the daughter runs away.

Alcohol video—A drunken man staggers up the stairs to his home and is greeted by a disgusted wife. He is barely in control of himself. They fight at length. She accuses him of destroying the family. Their teenage boy comes home and, unknown to them, sees his parents fighting. Understanding his father's betrayal of the family, he goes upstairs with a sad expression on his face, packs some belongings in a duffel bag, and leaves to join a gang.

- **Discussion**

In the discussion, people started sharing very personally. In previous sessions, the participants had not actually talked or shared very much. A radical change occurred at this point. A man talked about his son running away. Then a woman with a 14-year-old daughter told everyone about what cocaine had done to her daughter and herself. After the daughter had become addicted and sent to a rehabilitation institution, the mother tried the drug to see how it would affect her and to understand her daughter's motive and experience. She tried it only once and did not like it. But she understood the pleasure of it because it made her feel strong and happy and she could understand why people take it.

Staff gave the group the names of local resources that provide help with drug and alcohol addiction.

- **Staff review of the session**

Julianne commented, "This was a real breakthrough in group process. The man and woman sharing their personal problems with their children really changed the dynamics of the group. They became a group, where they were helping each other, rather than just a bunch of people in a class."

She also noted the importance of having started the session with the most rudimentary basics about alcoholism and its effects. "We were very basic. What is alcoholism? What is whiskey? Earlier in the course we were struck with how little people actually knew about alcoholism. It would never have occurred to me to start on this basic level. It's not only that people don't know how to solve the problem, it's that they don't even know what the problem is. Further, they think that Americans do not have alcohol problems. It was a major revelation to them that many Americans do have this problem.

"Social service people who give courses like this need to really examine their assumptions about the knowledge base of the people they are serving. People get really inadequate and essentially wrong information because whoever is giving them the information needs to start out at a much more basic level. Whatever the problem, don't assume that they know what the problem is."

■ SESSION V
Gangs

• Presentation

Hoeun presented information on gangs. What is a gang? Who are the members? What do they do and wear? He discussed the difference between gangs who participate in criminal activity and drugs as compared to groups of adolescents who go around together but do not do harmful things to themselves or others. In Cambodia, youth do not separate themselves from the family as is customary in the United States. Therefore, parents may not want their children to go out with friends, even for benign activities. They may label their children's groups as "gangs." They then give themselves more anxiety than is warranted.

• Video

The video clip, featuring Cambodian teenage gang members, portrays a group of young men taking various types of drugs in an intimate hideout. The young man who had run away from home in the alcohol scenario (see above) is introduced by one of the gang members and is brought into the drug-taking process by the group. After this drug-taking scene, several members of the group break into a car.

• Suggested alternatives

Take a positive approach to keep your child from wanting to join a gang. An orderly, structured household allows children to keep company with good friends. Invite your children's friends to your home so you know them. On payday or whenever you can, make a point of having a fun activity for your family and include the children's friends—or get a gift for the child. Provide positive, fun activities. Praise children

when they do good things, not just punish them when they do bad things.

- **Discussion**

A woman and a man shared experiences of their children joining gangs. Another parent asked the woman if she needed help and the woman responded, "Not right now." Staff suggests that one way to deal with a gang problem after it occurs is to enlist previous friends of the child, who are not in gangs, to renew their relationship with the child and help give him an alternative. The group offered to support each other if they see each other's children involved in unacceptable behaviors.

- **Staff reflection on the session**

The parents found the idea of praising children for doing good things to be a new concept.

■ SESSION VI

Runaways

- **Discussion**

Staff began the session by talking about the problem of runaways and asked the parents what they would do if they found themselves in this situation. The woman who had shared her story (in Session IV) about her cocaine-addicted daughter said that after her daughter had run away, her family and her Cambodian neighbors looked down on her. She became very depressed, as is often the case with parents whose children run away. Staff explained that we are all in this support group together. We want parents to be able to share their sadness and to give sympathy to each other. The message to the group was that they needed to give support to

their members. One woman responded by saying that we all need to trust each other. If one group member saw the child of another group member in gang activity or some other activity that was harmful to the child, the person needed to report the incident to the parent. The parent in turn needed to trust that the group member who reported the incident to them was truly trying to help and was not looking down on them.

■ SESSION VII
Child Abuse Law

• Background to the session

The question of the State of Washington's child abuse laws had surfaced as a pressing issue for many of the parents as early as the first or second sessions. The project staff had chosen to defer it to this seventh session because of its potential for stimulating pain, discomfort, and possibly alienation—all of which would have been counter-productive for the staff-parent relationship and for the group as a whole.

In essence, the issue is as follows: most of the parents believed that the child abuse laws stated that any kind of physical punishment of children, including all forms of spanking, was forbidden. Further, they believed that if detected, the parents were subject to being arrested and fined. Since spanking children is at the heart of most Cambodians' child-rearing philosophy, this interpretation of the law meant to them that they were effectively barred from being able to discipline or control their children.

This is a particularly poignant issue in a course dealing with the problems parents are suffering because their children are

out of control. A major point here is that the parents' interpretation of the law is incorrect. With all of this background in mind, Julianne gave the following presentation to the parents.

- **Presentation**

Julianne included numerous dramatic enactments in her talk to illustrate her points. Savis translated: "I know that almost every time that we have this class, people talk about what is the child abuse law and the law about hitting kids in the United States. So, first I am going to talk about the law and then I will answer any questions you have about the law. This is a copy that is prepared by the State of Washington written in Cambodian to tell you about the law. If you didn't get a copy last week, we can give you another one. The main point of the law is that when you discipline your children, you have to use discipline that does not cause harm to the child. The law says that physical discipline is okay as long as it does not cause damage to the child.

"So, if I have a small child and I use just my flat hand and do like (models a slap) that, it is okay. But if you have your fist closed and you hit really hard, don't do that, because it will cause damage inside the child. If you use a stick to hit the child, if you use a little one like this (shows a small stick), that's all right. But if you use a book and you go like this (models banging someone on the head and squeals of laughter come from the group), don't do that. And you cannot threaten a child with a weapon.

"If you have a very small child less than three years old, do not shake them. Because if they are small and you shake them, it may break their necks or cause brain damage. That

is serious, very serious. As a general rule, do not shake any child. No choking. No picking up the baby and throwing it.

"So in general, I think you all know about children and you can think about anything that will cause them damage. If you shake them and break the neck bone, or hit them so hard that they have damage inside, hit their liver or something like that, that's the stuff that you should not do. But if you want to spank, that's okay. You decide for yourself the best way to handle your children. The law says you cannot do anything that causes damage to your child."

"If you do something and the police come, the police will ask you what you did—and they will look at the kid to see if the kid is healthy or not healthy. Sometimes they will take the child to the doctor to check whether the child is okay inside. They will try to decide whether what you did was reasonable for this age and size child. And physical discipline can only be by their own parents. Not by an aunt, not by a friend, not even by a foster parent."

- **Discussion**

Much animated conversation followed Julianne's statement. Parents asked what constitutes evidence of harm to the child and staff responded that if the spanking results in a bruise or welt that lasts to the next day, that can be taken as evidence of abuse. Many parents in the group were not content with a law that says you can spank but not bruise. They said that if one spanks the child just a little bit, the child is not scared and you might as well not spank at all. When only lightly spanked, the children will say, "It doesn't hurt. It doesn't hurt. It doesn't hurt." They added that some children bruise easily so that almost any spanking will leave a bruise.

In response to this discussion, Hoeun took the occasion to speak for about 15 minutes. His talk included the following messages: he told the parents that they needed to "bend." "If you want to protect your children and prevent gangs, we have another way to help you. If you don't want to get in trouble about child abuse, you can have rules you enforce from a very early age. Have good order, good discipline in your house. Starting when the children are young, have an orderly house with rules. Then your children won't get out of control. There needs to be regulation of what time children go to bed, what activities they need to do, when to turn off the TV, and when to come home when they go out.

"Use alternatives to physical punishment. If your child keeps breaking a rule that you have clearly explained, then use alternative forms of punishment; for example, don't let him watch TV, don't let her go outside, have them wash dishes for two or three days, or clean the bathroom. Don't give them their allowance that week. You need to show love to your children, provide good physical care for them, spend more time with them, ask them about their ideas, encourage them to go to school, give them some choices, and give them rewards when they are doing well. You need to reduce your drinking and gambling if it is getting in the way of your doing these things."

- **Staff reflection on the session**

Julianne's dramatic illustrations of her points were an important part of the presentation. Cambodians are very oriented towards drama and the whole group had fun with this otherwise grim topic, especially when Julianne almost hit Savis. This message could not have been communicated effectively

in a strictly verbal form. A straight lecture would have been boring and ineffective.

This session on the child abuse laws was painful. The group worked well to support each other, but the topic was difficult. It was helpful to be able to tell everyone that the last class (next week) would be positive recognition of their efforts to learn.

■ SESSION VIII
Party, Evaluation, and Award of Certificates

The last session was held in a restaurant and included a full Chinese meal. It was convivial. The participating parents obviously had become friends, no longer lonely and isolated.

The formal part included speeches by staff praising the participants for showing their love for their children by working so hard in class and learning to "bend" to the new circumstances. Everyone received a certificate, as in a graduation ceremony.

Members of the class then gave speeches of thanks to the staff and to the ICCB. The oldest man and oldest woman were pushed forward to perform this role. After the formal, obligatory speeches, some of the other participants spoke of their appreciation of the class and of the support they had received from other group members.

Staff's Assessment of the Eight-Week Sequence

■ *Reduce the material to be covered to one topic per session, so parents will have time to share and ask questions.*

- ***Expand the session to two hours,*** for the same reason.
- The six most important topics are ***child abuse laws, discipline, alcoholism, gambling, gangs, and running away.***
- ***Keep emphasizing the importance of parent-child communication.*** It applies to every aspect of the parent's relationship with their child. e.g., the importance of having discussions with the child, explaining the rules to him/her. Don't just tell them the rules; explain them. If you're having a hard time with your finances, don't just say "no" to your children. Explain to them that this month the money is gone for such and such reasons. Next month maybe you can get the thing you want.
- ***Review child abuse laws.*** In covering the child abuse law, take the position that staff basically agrees that if the parents rely on the child's fear of physical punishment to control the child's behavior they probably have to hit the child hard enough to bruise him/her. So that in effect, parents really are up against the child abuse law if control through physical punishment is their primary method. **Suggest to them alternative approaches to enforcing rules.**
- ***Continue to emphasize the importance of "bending like a river."*** Do what's fair in relation to your child's circumstances. Rules need to be fair in the context of American culture.
- Instead of having a session specially devoted to comparing Cambodian and American cultures, ***have that theme running fully through all of the sessions.*** However, if the staff needs a non-threatening topic to allow the group to bond, this topic might provide that opportunity.

- ***Continue to emphasize the importance of parents being consistent.*** Parents need to come home when the children come home, and if parents tell the children they have to study hard in school, the parents can't be out gambling and drinking all the time. In general, emphasize in numerous ways that parents are models for their children.

- ***Be as concrete as possible in staff presentations. Use stories, videos, slides, music, etc.*** Always have something to show them. If it is all verbal, without visuals, they lose focus and/or don't remember the material. Increase the number of videos used; for example, videos on aspects of American culture as well as on Cambodian problem situations.

- ***Maintain the policy that one should not ask members of the group directly to talk about their problems.*** First get them to trust you and the group. Then provide the opportunity for them to talk about their problems.

- ***Continue to emphasize the importance of group members supporting each other.*** An indicator of their feelings of trust and support is when they are beginning to talk about their problems, when they are expressing sympathy to each other and offer suggestions to each other on how to solve problems.

- ***Be available for more individual parent counseling for those members of the group who cannot ask for help comfortably in the group setting.*** This would include being available to refer them to specific services when needed.

- ***Continue to offer transportation if possible.*** The practice of transporting participants to each session was logistically difficult but had many benefits. It broke through barriers

and provided the parents with a sense of importance. It provided an opportunity for staff to approach the content of the class with individual parents in a more personal way during informal conversations that took place *en route*. Staff would do the transporting again if possible.

Cambodians assembled near a polling station in Prey Veng Province, on the second day of voting.

UN Photo 186005/J. Isaac

V

THE BRONX STORY

Helping Parents Become Closer to Their Children and Improve Their Parenting Skills

Setting and Staff

The program at the Bronx site was planned and administered by staff from the Montefiore Medical Center, Indochinese Mental Health Program. Judy Berenson, Assistant Director of Social Service, Department of Psychiatry, Joyce Wong, Social Worker, and Sara Phok, Cambodian Mental Health Worker, planned and taught the course.

The Parent Participants

Sixteen women participated in this program. All of these mothers had young children, up to age 7. Quite a few had children in the 8-14 range and only two had children 15 or older. The average age of the mothers was 39. Their average time in this country was six years. The average time spent in the Thailand camps was six years. All but one mother had only two-three years of formal education in Cambodia. Most of the mothers were married young in Cambodia, usually through marriages arranged by family or forced marriages imposed by the Khmer Rouge. Seven of the sixteen women were separated from their husbands. Nine were currently

married, but a very high proportion of these were experiencing marital conflict.

All of women had previous contact with the staff in the Family Health Clinic: seven as mental health patients, and nine as family health clinic patients who were referred by their M.D. or recruited by Joyce Wong or Sara Phok for the short-term parent education group. Ten had major depression, three had post-traumatic stress disorders, and two were battered mothers (without depression or post-traumatic stress disorder).

Logistics Surrounding the Course

Approximately 3,000 Cambodian refugees live in the Bronx. All of the participating families lived either in the immediate vicinity of the clinic or along the bus route that went directly to the clinic. They lived in clusters of related families as arranged by the resettlement agency, scattered among African-American and Hispanic neighbors. The housing consisted mainly of three-story apartment buildings. The families were accustomed to the clinic and used to coming there on their own. They knew Joyce and Sara and trusted the Center staff. Transportation was reimbursed and not an issue. Staff felt it highly advisable to call most of the mothers the night before a meeting as a reminder. Child care was provided at the site to facilitate the mothers' attendance without pressure of children in the group. The course was scheduled during school hours and not during school vacations, to decrease the number of children requiring child care. The length of each session was 1.5 hours.

Initial Staff Perception of Need

The staff's assessment of the parenting needs of this group stemmed from their previous work with these mothers and from observations of other Cambodian families who has received services from the center. Frequently, the staff witnessed the parents' sense of disempowerment over parent-child relationships. Parent and child became "disconnected," noted Sara Phok, the Cambodian Mental Health Worker. Relations between parent and child became characterized by lack of communication, including lack of response to parental limits and requests. Parental behavior which the child experienced as severe rejection included increasing parental rigidity and threats to disown the child. Some parents became upset and said, "I am giving you away and you are leaving the family!" They didn't necessarily mean it, but the children experienced it as real rejection: "They don't care, they don't love me. Nobody loves me." This can precipitate a crisis in the adolescent's rebellious behavior; i.e., fighting at home, running away, feeling isolated, being truant.

In the relations between parents and younger children, staff saw many possible precursors of the alienation between parent and child that emerged in adolescence; i.e., low levels of interaction and communication with the child from birth onward, lack of praise and other positive communications to the young child. Staff viewed all these as, in part, a function of the general stress level in the parents' lives and a lack of child development knowledge.

In addition, staff had concerns about the diet of the Cambodian children. While parents had a clear sense of the quality of the Cambodian diet, they allowed the children to "be in charge of the diet." As children entered school and

were exposed to more American foods, they began to ask for those foods and to reject the family's healthy Cambodian dishes as "nasty." Instead, they took their cues from the TV ads—sugar and fat replacing traditional food.

Staff noticed that when parents brought the children to the clinic in the morning, the children often were having soda and potato chips for breakfast. In staff's estimation, this junk food phenomenon stemmed from a complex set of causes: 1) parents having difficulty denying their children desired food after the previous period of deprivation for both parents and children; 2) parents feeling intimidated by their children's insistence on certain foods; 3) parental misconceptions about the American diet; e.g., during a home visit to a Cambodian family, the parents provided McDonald's carry-outs for the staff; 4) parents not being aware of the comparative nutritional value of foods, and storekeepers in the inner city displaying more non-nutritional, lower-quality foods. Decisions about food, which symbolize parental nurturing and parenting in general, had fallen significantly into the hands of the children—"The children tell us," one parent remarked when asked how she chooses groceries.

The staff was astounded to learn that the mothers believed that Americans did not have problems with their children—that Cambodians had them because they do not speak the language or understand the culture. For these mothers, like many other refugees and first generation immigrants, their children and television provided their only links to American culture and society.

Staff Goals

The overall goal of the program, as presented to parents and used to organize the program as a whole, was: ***to help parents become closer to their children and to improve their parenting skills***. The spirit of the course was preventative:

1. Build a solid relationship between parent and child in the early years to prevent the potential "disconnected" phenomenon of the adolescent years with all of its associated pain and conflict;

2. Give parental guidelines for parenting of children and adolescents in order to provide a solid continuity in the relationship;

3. Foster the overall healthy emotional development of the child in the process; and

4. Correct other facets of child development such as poor diet and unsafe conditions for children.

The specific goals of the program emphasized parental education to develop knowledge of child and adolescent development. The aim was to provide effective discipline and structure of family life, giving them alternatives in disciplining and teaching them principles of communication and bonding with the child as a foundation for solid parent-child relationships and the healthy development of the child.

As part of the above objectives of reinstating the leadership of the parents and promoting stability and emotional well-being in the family, the course was devoted to honoring and integrating Buddhist rituals and customs as well as the spiritual and other traditional values of the parents.

The Structure, Content, and Flow of the Eight Sessions

The sessions were structured and conducted with the intention of maximizing parent comfort, personal meaning, and participation.

The eight sessions were planned and presented as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION
II. STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT (birth-4)
III. LATENCY AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT (5-16)
IV. DISCIPLINING YOUNGER CHILDREN
V. DISCIPLINING ADOLESCENTS
VI. NUTRITION AND DIET
VII. WOMEN'S ISSUES
VIII. SPIRITUALITY AND ETHNICITY

SESSION I
Introduction

The goal of this first session was to introduce the parents to the course and take the first step in grounding the course in the parents' expression of their problems and issues.

In this first session, as in all subsequent meetings of the class, there was a shared responsibility for planning the presentations and specific roles designat[illegible] for aspects of the program between the three group leaders. The contributions by Joyce

Wong, M.S.W., Coordinator Indochinese Mental Health Program, or Judith Berenson, Assistant Director, Social Services, Department of Psychiatry and Ms. Sara Phok, Cambodian mental health worker, were translated by Ms. Phok.

- **Format**

Parents were asked whether they wanted to sit in chairs or on the floor. They chose to sit on the floor in a circle with their shoes off.

- **Brief Introduction**

The purpose of the course is to help parents improve their relationship with their children, become closer to their children, and improve their parenting skills. Staff explained that "closer to your children" meant learning how to speak and listen better to your child and developing a bond with your child.

- **Presentation**

Staff then showed three scenarios from a video tape made by the Tacoma project which, using Cambodian actors, depicts brief stories involving stressful relations between parents and their teenage children, usually ending in the child running away or engaging in some other behavior causing great pain and conflict to the parent (see Tacoma Story, Chapter IV).

- **"Go Around"**

Encouraging discussion of the video tape, one of the staff stated, "You know, these are problems that many Cambodian parents face, that all parents face. Could you go around and introduce yourself and tell us do you have any similar problems? What are the issues that you face?" Parents were then asked to each talk about who was in their family, the ages of their children, the kinds of problems or difficul-

ties they had with their children, and who did the disciplining. Staff explained that they needed the parents to share some of their personal information in order to help them. Sara Phok wrote the information on newsprint. Staff added that everything the parents talk about is confidential and is to remain in the group, not to be discussed with people outside the group. It turned out that in all cases the mother did the disciplining. The problems that frequently emerged were the following:

- Many of the mothers felt "overwhelmed" with so many young children and the care and management of children on a daily basis. It was not uncommon for a mother to have six young children in a one room apartment;
- Children were not listening to them. When they asked them not to do something, the child typically repeated the unacceptable behavior;
- Difficulties with the English language;
- Worries about safety at home and in the streets (i.e., hanging out with the wrong people);
- A desire to communicate better with their child.

• Child abuse laws

Staff briefly reviewed the New York State child abuse laws with the parents and found that the mothers by and large had an accurate perception of the law; i.e., that abuse concerned beating and injuring a child or neglecting a child. Staff added that the law also covered sexual abuse. Parents did not manifest a concern about being constrained by the law or about being arrested for misinterpretations of their be-

havior. (This stands in sharp contrast to the case of the Tacoma parents discussed above.)

At the end of the session, the parents and their children (who had been in a child care group during the session) shared fruit together along with the staff. This became a weekly ritual of every week's session. Parents who came early to the session began the process of preparing the fruit. This encouraged parent interaction at the end of the session when the children joined in the treats.

- **Post-session reflections by staff**

Staff were pleased with the easy and open participation of the mothers. We were so glad that they were so open and used it as a place where they could talk about the problems that they were experiencing, and most of all, that they were interactive and able to voice what they were going through. They were very trusting. They had a good rapport with one another. This was a major process goal of the staff.

■ SESSION II
Stages of Child Development (birth-4)

- **Review**

Staff reviewed the list of the previous week's problems stated by the parents.

- **"Go around"**

Staff then asked the group, "Which do you find are the main problems for you—the most overwhelming issues in caring for your children?" The mothers responded: no free time, feeling overwhelmed with activities in the morning,

children's activity level often requiring constant supervision, children not listening and often repeating negative behavior.

- **Presentation on early childhood development**

To give the mothers a framework for understanding and establishing norms of age-appropriate behavior for young children, staff first discussed the concept of "attachment." They then talked about the importance of looking at the child while feeding, about stages of talking, playing, sitting, and walking, and about toilet training, separation issues, and the use of pacifiers.

- **Presentation on safety**

In response to the mothers' concern about safety in the house (Session I), staff showed mothers safety gadgets for securing doors, cabinets, drawers, toilets, and electrical plugs, as well as a latch to place high up on the front door. Staff also talked of the importance of hiding sharp objects and chemicals. Parents had no previous knowledge of safety assistance.

- **Presentation with the doll**

Joyce Wong demonstrated bonding with your child. By talking with your child from a very early age, you will be creating a closer relationship, where your child comes to you instead of being distant. In her demonstration, Joyce commented that "you should always carry your baby close to you so that your baby can see you and feel you. That helps you develop a relationship. ***Bonding begins between a parent and a child when you are physically close to the child, stimulating your child, talking with your child, and playing with your child.***"

Staff also addressed the parents' very common practice of having their children use pacifiers well after the age of four. Returning to the themes of closeness and interaction, staff encouraged the parents to "talk to, play with, and soothe the child through interaction rather than to use a pacifier to deal with negative behavior. We tell them the child needs to be stimulated more in terms of developing play and that if a child is crying or having a tantrum there are other ways to address it than just giving him a pacifier."

Staff introduced stuffed animals to serve as the "transitional object" that had been served by the pacifiers up to that point. The parents loved seeing their children's joy and pleasure with the new stuffed companions.

■ SESSION III
Latency and Adolescent Development (5-16)

- **Review**

Staff reviewed the home safety devices that had been demonstrated in the previous session and gave a sample to each parent to take home. They repeated the recommendation to keep sharp objects out of reach, electrical outlets covered, and appliances out of reach.

- **Presentation**

Staff outlined major issues in the latency period (ages 5-12) and adolescence. Starting with latency, they emphasized the importance of scheduling the child's day, reinforcing homework, and establishing rules in the house.

Scheduling was discussed as a fundamental kind of order in the home. Recommendations were for parents to set time

with children to do homework, considering the child's wish to play or watch television. The schedule should provide for one dinner time. Some mothers had been making two dinners, one when some children came home from school (instead of offering a snack) and another in the evening. Staff said, "No wonder you are overwhelmed; you should have dinner at one time and everyone is expected to eat at that time." That was the theme throughout, that scheduling is not only good for the children, it also reduces parents' feeling of being overwhelmed.

- **"Go around"**

Regarding the importance of scheduling and monitoring homework, staff asked, "How do you deal with your older children with their homework?" One of the parents said, "Oh, I'm not involved with homework because I don't speak English." Another responded, "I don't speak the language but I make sure that my daughters do their homework and show it to me." Staff picked up on this mother's example as a model. Staff emphasized that homework should be scheduled prior to free time. For example, first snack time, then homework, then television time. ***"This is all part of setting rules from the beginning of school age—that there is a schedule that they need to follow and that children benefit from having a schedule. They need structure."*** Staff repeated that this ties in with the issue of feeling overwhelmed. If their children do not have a schedule, that contributes to parents being overwhelmed.

The scheduling of homework and the involvement of parents in monitoring homework activities also gets the parent actively involved in the child's education. It is another facet of at-

tempting to empower the parents in relation to their children and the children's development.

Staff also talked with the mothers about scheduling their week (e.g.,washing on certain days) to reduce the pressures and complexities in their lives.

- **Presentation on normal adolescence**

Staff described the physical and emotional development of adolescents, providing examples of how parents often perceive normal adolescent behavior (i.e., mood swings, emphasis on friends, focusing on the body) as an indicator of problems. "I am sure that one minute your son is saying hello and I like you and you are such a good mother and an hour later you didn't let him do something that he wanted and he is cursing you!" The parents connected with these examples and laughed about them.

Staff continued: "That is very typical of what adolescence is like. It is important to remember that this phase will end. Their bodies are maturing. They are being influenced by their friends and school and they are picking up on other things. It is important for you to remain an important person in their life, to be an authority, and to provide some structure."

The parents did not have any sense that these behaviors were considered normal by Americans and they further stated that "American parents don't have those problems with their kids." Parents cited television programs as the model of perfect American families.

- **"Go around"**

Staff posed the question: "What are the major issues with your adolescents?" The few mothers who had adolescents mentioned feelings of inadequacy around adolescents, feeling that their own language problems were at fault. They reflected a tendency to abdicate their parenting role and not set limits. There was a tremendous hesitancy to say "no" to their children, partly predicated on the belief that American families do not have these kinds of problems with their children.

A mother talked about her difficulties with her adolescent boy. He doesn't do his homework, he talks back to her, he comes home two hours after she asks him to come home.

Staff recommended a multi-faceted approach involving setting clear limits, responding to infractions with consequences and negotiation. On the one hand, they talked about the importance of clear limits and about forms of appropriate punishment: taking away phone time or television time, not allowing a child to go out for a day; i.e., teaching the child about consequences for their behavior. They also explained the importance of consistency of response. On the other hand, they recommended that the mother discuss the limits with the boy, negotiate it with him. "One needs to listen to adolescents in terms of what the adolescents are struggling with. ***To negotiate a rule and consequence gives the adolescent some power and a feeling of being treated fairly.***"

Staff encouraged the mothers generally to become involved in the lives of their children; for example, to know where their children are and to know their children's friends. "A parent has the right to ask who the child is going out with. If

they say they are going to a party, you have a right to ask where and get the phone number where they are. You can ask if you can drop them off and pick them up." Staff suggested that when a child says he/she is going to another child's house and the parent is uncomfortable or worried about the child, the parent should ask for the name of the friend's parents and call them on the phone.

Staff's encouragement of the mothers to be active in their children's lives was a way of empowering them.

- **Recommendations**

Staff reviewed many of the ideas that had come out in the discussion: providing for daily scheduling and routine from early morning to bed time, the importance of maintaining authority as a parent, and the need for structure and consistency.

- **Sexual abuse**

As a finale, Sara read a few stories (in Khmer) about Cambodian children who had experienced some sexual abuse. Staff went over the idea of good touches and bad touches and how they can educate their children about this. The parents said that their children get well educated about this in school.

- **Staff theory about the "go around"**

"We decided that we did not want to stand there and lecture, although we did sometimes. I think it empowers the women to talk about their own experiences and share with one another. They can learn from each other. We wanted to take it from what they are concerned about and what their issues are, utilizing group work techniques."

- **Staff reflections on teaching parents about normal development**

In order to provide discipline it is helpful to have a framework for looking at child and adolescent issues. Parents felt overwhelmed by the urban environment; their upbringing in rural areas was their only model. This was a stark contrast to their children's daily experience.

■ SESSION IV
Disciplining Younger Children

- **Review**

Staff reviewed ideas about scheduling for children, and added, "It doesn't have to be exactly like this—just to give you an idea that you provide structures so you are less overwhelmed during the day. Schedule a specific time for bathing children, breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack time, homework, bed time. Be consistent. For example, 8:30 a.m.– breakfast, 12:00 noon– lunch, 3:00 p.m.– snack, 4:00 p.m.– homework, 6:00 p.m.– dinner, 6:30 p.m.– bath, 8:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m.– bed time." One of the mothers said, "I did the scheduling this week."

- **"Go around"**

Staff asks the parents, "How do you discipline your young child? When you feel the need to spank your child how do you do it—gently and in control of your anger?"

- **Presentation**

Sara and Joyce performed a small role play of a mother and child in a grocery store. The child is having a temper tantrum when the mother is denying him a food that he

wants. The staff's role play and subsequent discussion communicated the importance of: 1) setting rules of expected behavior; 2) being consistent; 3) giving consequences for breaking rules; and 4) providing both positive and negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement includes praising, playing, talking about the child's feelings, and setting up a system of rewards.

- **Recommendations**

Staff went over many of the ideas covered in the session: do not give money to bribe children; do not reward temper tantrums; do not stop talking to a child for days; and do not threaten a child with abandonment. They also discussed alternative ways to discipline children besides hitting them.

■ SESSION V
Disciplining Adolescents

- **Review**

The staff reviewed disciplining young children.

- **Presentation**

Staff explained that the following characteristics are a part of normal adolescent development: biological changes, mood swings, importance of friends, testing parental authority, etc.

- **"Go around"**

Staff asked parents of older children, "How do you discipline your teenager?" The parents responded with discussion of the problems: arguing with the parent; not informing parents of whereabouts; sexual activity; desire for clothes that family cannot afford; constant use of the telephone; and the parents'

own difficulty in relating with the child's teachers and other school personnel.

- **Recommendations**

"Remember that you, the parent, can be in charge. ***But talk with the teenager and negotiate requests and rules.*** Keep your firmness, but don't be rigid. Give the child some power in the negotiation. Don't block heads with the teenager. That's where a lot of parents run into a lot of trouble. Teenagers are becoming independent. They are trying to separate themselves from their parents."

Parents should trust their own judgment on issues of safety, have specific rules about phone time, curfew, calling home when late, going out without permission. Attempt to learn who the child's friends are and where they go. Involve yourself in school and visit the teacher and request the report card.

"Outline for the adolescent the consequences of breaking a rule, such as no telephone, no television, etc. Do ***not*** respond with the silent treatment; i.e., when you become angry, do not respond by not talking to the child for days. Instead, talk. Don't talk initially (while you are still so angry) but you have to address the issue. Teenagers tell us about their experience of the silent treatment. They feel that the parent doesn't care about them when the parent doesn't talk. It is really harmful."

SESSION VI

Nutrition and Diet

- **Goal**

The goal of this session was to educate the mothers about healthy foods and non-healthy foods.

- **Review**

Staff reviewed disciplining adolescents (repeating ideas from Lesson V).

- **Presentation**

Staff laid out a wide range of packaged foods and covered them up. There was forty dollars worth of junk food—rice sugar cereals, Captain Crunch, Fruit Loops, Frosted Flakes, candies, chips, sodas, cakes, cookies, and some nutritious foods like juices. Staff uncovered the foods and asked, "Choose which foods you give your child." One began picking all the foods that the staff wanted to teach them to avoid. Then after several more parents made the same choices, the staff said, "How many more of you do this?"—and the rest said, "Yes, the same." Then staff asked, "How did you decide to choose these foods for your children?" Parents responded with answers like, "My child tells me to get this. They see it on television."

Staff raised the issue of store owners giving parents cheap sugary substitutes for their WIC orange juice coupons and taught the mothers to look carefully at the label to see if it is 100% orange juice. If it is the wrong item (not real orange juice), say, "No, we want orange juice; that is not orange juice."

Staff then raised the issue of children eating candy and potato chips for breakfast.

- **Recommendations**

The staff recommended that families share at least one meal together. This is a good time to spend together, doing a family activity together, and not having people spread all around. It allows you to see what happened during the day, just a quiet time together. Give your kids three meals a day, including the five food groups. Breakfast is important for children, so use non-sugar cereals. Use juice, milk, and water—stay away from soda and juice drinks. Give healthy snacks to children. Integrate traditional Cambodian diet in any meal. Stay away from McDonald's; it is high in fat, high in salt, and expensive. As a treat it is okay, but it is not good for you.

- **Staff reflection after class**

Staff were surprised about the degree to which parents were intimidated by their children on the subject of what food to buy.

■ SESSION VII
Women's Issues

- **Review**

The staff reviewed diet and nutrition.

- **"Go around"**

Staff asked, "What are the major issues that you face as women?" Mothers responded: 1) feeling overwhelmed because of not enough daily support in caring for their children; 2) concerns about a husband with an alcohol problem and a potential to be abusive.

- **Recommendations**

Staff counseled the women on their rights regarding an abusive husband. ***"It is important to create a strong female network for yourself like forming groups and talking to one another and getting to know other women. It is important for you not to be isolated."*** They encouraged them to access the clinic for assistance in marital conflict.

- **Review of major concepts from Sessions II through VI**

Staff reviewed the diet and nutrition session, since only eight women had attended that session. Staff went through the same outline with the junk foods as they had done the previous week. In their general review staff again mentioned the importance of "consistency," as they had all the way through the course. "Do things over and over again with your children. Patience, repetition, and talking to them again and again about the same thing are crucial."

■ SESSION VIII
Spirituality and Ethnicity

- **"Go around"**

Staff asked, "How do you teach your children about Cambodian culture? How do you maintain traditional and spiritual values? How do you maintain respect as a parent?"

The mothers shared their ideas. Some of the answers included: "One of the ways to maintain Cambodian values is to teach proper greetings to children, to respect adults. When you greet an adult you lower your head and bow and talk politely. We cook, bring food, and attend temple together on

the Buddhist holiday. We teach children to respect their parents because they are the ones that raised you."

"How do you maintain the respect for you as a parent?" A mother stated, "The child listens to the parent, and the parent educates them. They just accept the education of the parent. By custom, a girl or boy is not allowed to enter a relationship without the parents meeting. These are the traditions that we use to teach our children. We teach this, but they don't listen."

Staff asked, "Do the children like to ask you about your life in Cambodia?" A parent responded, "The older children, they ask about our experience in the past, but the ones that are born here, they do not ask." Staff asked,"Do you think it is important to maintain your traditional Cambodian spiritual values?" The group answered, "Yes." Joyce said, "Why? Tell us why." A parent responded, "If we don't teach them, then we lose our culture. We have to tell them very often; otherwise they forget." We have as an example Sara, who shares her experiences of how she shares Cambodian values and customs with her children. "I sit together with my kids and we join together and sometimes my children and I light incense." The staff reviewed the five precepts of Buddhism.

- **Recommendations regarding the precepts of Buddhism**

Joyce Wong emphasized the experience as a child coming from an ethnic minority that it is important to provide a strong ethnic identity. "It is important to teach this from a young age so they do not lose your culture, the same culture you were stripped of in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge. ***As they grow up and are more integrated into society, it is im-***

portant to be proud of themselves and their identity. It will help them be stronger as adults."

The Five Precepts of Buddhism:

1. I undertake the training-rule to abstain from killing living creatures.

2. I undertake the training-rule to abstain from taking what is not given.

3. I undertake the training-rule to abstain from wrong conduct in sexual desires.

4. I undertake the training-rule to abstain from false speech.

5. I undertake the training-rule to abstain from intoxicants (such as those) distilled and fermented causing carelessness.

Staff's Overall Assessment of the Eight-Week Sequence

Overall, staff was very pleased with the design of the course. It provided a good structure that offered strong direction but also lent itself to building on parents' formulations of their most pressing problems and provided space and encouragement for parents to interact with the staff and with each other. There was a balance between staff presentation and group member participation. The review period at the beginning of each session was very important. The length of the session (1.5 hours) felt right.

The major modification that staff would make the next time around would be to reduce the number of topics to be covered. Some of the sessions felt crowded, with too much to

do. Specifically, staff felt that the course should focus primarily on ***child development*** and ***discipline, nutrition,*** and ***safety.*** The session on women's issues (VIII) should be replaced by a general review. The sexual abuse section in Session III overloaded that session. It should be kept, but moved to a different session.

A young girl carrying her baby brother at the Phnom Penh Reception Centre, Cambodia

UN Photo 186148/J. Isaac

VI

A PLANNING OUTLINE

Introduction

The knowledge we have gained from the thought and work of these three refugee parent education programs has useful implications for the design and implementation of other parent education programs, especially those serving immigrant or refugee populations. The purpose of this chapter and the next chapter is to explore some of those possibilities.

If you plan to use the accounts of the three programs to help you design your own program, there are at least two approaches you can take at this point: one approach is to re-examine the three accounts and take from them what you feel are useful ideas for the design of your own program. Below, you will find a suggested outline that can help you organize your thinking as you go back through the material.

A second approach is to read our treatment of the material below, organized through the same outline. The limitation of taking the second approach exclusively, however, is that you confine yourself to the lenses of this guide. ***The optimal approach would be to first take your own notes and then see if the guide's treatment adds anything to your own perspective.***

Suggested Outline for Organizing Your Observations and Thoughts on the Three Programs

A. Recruitment of Staff

The following questions may prove useful for staff recruitment:

- What composition of a staff team is beneficial?
- What are the important qualifications of refugee staff?
- What are the qualifications of the non-Southeast Asian staff?
- What qualifications apply to staff as a whole?

B. Preliminary Planning

The general consensus across the three programs is that at least 15-20 hours of preliminary planning are required to adequately plan an eight-week course sequence. The entire staff who will be teaching the course should be involved. The following is a sequentially organized set of steps for that purpose.

■ Needs Assessment

- Who are the members of the target group to be assessed?
- Given the identification of the target population, ***what are the key problems in parent-child relations and what are the contributors to those problems?***

■ Course Goals and Content

- Based on the assessment of problems and contributors, ***what should be the goals of the course?***

- Given the goal(s), ***what are the most important concepts and skills for parents to learn*** in order to move towards achieving the goals?

■ **Process Goals and Emphases**

- ***What classroom teaching strategies will be most beneficial*** in helping parents internalize the ideas and learn the associated skills?

■ **Implementing the Process and Content Goals—Course Sequence and Strategy**

- ***Structure of the course as a whole:*** What is a productive sequence of class sessions? Why is that a productive order? What ties the class sessions together?
- ***Structure of individual class sessions:*** How can one structure the individual class sessions so that they are comfortable and productive for the participants?
- ***Logistics within the class session:*** What seating arrangements, discussion aids, and provisions for breaks and snacks will best serve the purposes of the course?

C. Recruitment of Parent Participants

What are the considerations for a recruitment process that will ***successfully motivate parents to join the class, adequately prepare them*** for the course, and ***select parents who will attend regularly and function well*** in the course?

D. Logistical Support for Parents

What kinds of supports such as ***reminder telephone calls, transportation for parents, child care,*** and one-to-one supplementary counselling will be important in getting parents

to the course and helping them get the most out of the experience?

E. Implementation

- What kinds of flexibility in teaching strategies and course content are required as the course unfolds?
- What kind of staff planning between sessions is necessary to keep the course smoothly flowing and vital?

Cambodian refugee children in a Thailand camp

UN Photo 141085/John Isaac

VII

PATTERNS AND CONNECTIONS: A SYNTHESIS FOR PLANNING

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide assistance to the planning process by looking at some of the patterns, ideas, and conclusions that we see across the three projects. This chapter follows the planning outline suggested in the previous Chapter VI.

Composition of Staff

A. What composition of the course team is beneficial?

The three projects reported here reflect a considerable similarity in the composition of the staff teams that planned and implemented these courses.

To begin with, each team was composed of ***three*** members who were well qualified and complemented each other in a number of important ways. It seems likely that three is an optimal number: large enough to include a variety of needed skills and perspectives, as well as to provide a variety of presenters within a class session; small enough to facilitate the planning process; and economical enough to a fit a budget.

Each team was led by a seasoned administrator in the field of clinical services to families. Two of these leaders (Diane Pizzi in Providence and Julianne Duncan in Seattle/Tacoma) had extensive experience in work with Southeast Asian refugee families. In the third case (the Bronx), the broad clinical experience of Judith Berenson was complemented by another team member, Joyce Wong, the director of the refugee program at the clinic where the program took place. Joyce brought a rich bicultural perspective from her own family background and extensive experience with refugee families.

Each team also had one or two highly-qualified Cambodian refugee staff members who did much or most of the teaching and also served as translators for the other team member(s): Socheat Hak and Serei Tan in Providence; Hoeun Voeuk and Savis Ngo in Tacoma; and Sara Phok in the Bronx.

B. What are the important qualities to look for in selecting refugee staff?

The reflections of the various project staffs (not all included in Chapters III-V) help us to identify at least six qualities that appear to be important in selecting refugee staff members. Together they contribute to the credibility of the refugee staff in the eyes of parent participants and contribute to their overall effectiveness in the role of instructor.

- ***A good moral reputation in the community.*** This is encapsulated in the Cambodian proverb: "If your shirt is dirty don't tell your children that theirs has to be clean."
- ***Proven experience in successfully adapting to American society.*** Each of the five refugee staff in these projects had achieved degrees or certificates in

mental health work and had found a productive place for themselves in the American social service world.

- *Experience as a parent* (at least one of the refugee staff on the team).
- *A high level of adaptation and comfort in their personal life and work life.*
- *A positive, embracing, non-condescending and non-judgmental attitude towards the participants.*
- *Fully bilingual and literate in both languages.*

In addition, it would be helpful for this person to have some background in group work and/or teaching and in child development.

C. What are the qualifications of the non-Southeast Asian staff?

The non-Southeast Asian staff, in addition to the qualities covered above, should have the following additional characteristics:

- *Experience as a parent;*
- *Higher education;*
- *Good knowledge of the parenting material;*
- *Experience in working with the selected population;*
- *Ability to give and take and be non-judgmental and flexible;*
- *A good reputation;*
- *Non-defensive about American practices;*

- *Ability to distinguish between "American practices" and their own personally held preferences.*

D. What qualifications apply to staff as a whole?

In addition to the characteristics listed above, all staff should have the following characteristics:

- *Ability to model the values of order and clear communication;*
- *Empathic listening;*
- *Nurturance;*
- *Acceptance of the client's culture.*

Preliminary Planning

Below are suggested four major facets of the preliminary planning process. They are listed in the general order in which they take place. However, in reality one tends to move back and forth among them. These are: Needs Assessment; Goals and Content; Process Goals; and Course Sequence/Strategy.

A. Needs Assessment

■ *Who are the members of the target group to be assessed?*

Much of the variation in the course's content and strategies across the three sites probably can be understood in terms of differences in the *target populations* that each course was addressing.

For example, at the Providence and Bronx sites the classes were recruited almost entirely from parents with whom the instructors already had one-to-one counseling relationships. Thus, to begin with, the needs assessment in these two cases

stemmed from the staff's previous counseling experience with the participants. In addition, the Providence needs assessment was significantly influenced by the staff's experience with similarly recruited parents in the previous course conducted six months earlier. From the previous experience, for example, the staff concluded that the participating parents had so little understanding of the basic concepts and issues surrounding discipline that it seemed necessary to make discipline virtually the key focus in the course.

While the overall structure of the recruitment situation was similar between the Providence and Bronx sites, the characteristics of the parent groups themselves differed enough to have influenced the needs assessment and, hence, the course itself. It seems likely that the Providence group, generally speaking, represented somewhat higher degrees of family disorganization, which could have affected the needs assessment.

Tacoma presented a totally different configuration from the other two sites. Here, parents were recruited from the Cambodian refugee community at large, identifying themselves as having "problems" in their relationships with their children. Staff estimated that some 30-40% of the Cambodian refugee families would fit this category.

Since severe tensions in parent-child relations tend to emerge in the adolescent period, or just before, the staff assumed that the families coming forward would have adolescent children and would want to focus much of the course around their issues with those children. Thus, all of the video clips prepared by the staff dealt with adolescent sons and daughters.

The Tacoma course took a preventative posture, expressed in their metaphor, "putting on the brakes before the car rolls down the hill."

Chart 1 summarizes some of these differences between the three target populations.

CHART 1 Some Differences in the Target Populations across the Three Programs

	Source of the Target Group	Children's Ages
PROVIDENCE	Clinic group (child abuse, neglect, depression, and post-traumatic stress)	Mainly younger and pre-adolescent children
TACOMA	Parents in Cambodian community at large who are experiencing problems with their children	High proportion of adolescent children, owing to method of recruitment
BRONX	Clinic group (depression, post-traumatic stress, battering victims)	Mainly younger and latency-age children

■ Given the identification of the target population, what are the ***key problems in parent-child relations*** and what are the ***contributors to those problems***?

The two major components of a needs assessment are the key problems and the contributors to these problems, as viewed by those doing the needs analysis. Many of the identified "problems" will also be experienced by the target population as problems. Sometimes they may not be.

The key problems and contributors, as formulated by the respective staffs, are represented in ***Chart 2***.

CHART 2 Key Problems and Contributors to Those Problems, as Identified by Each of the Three Project Staffs for Their Target Groups

	Key Problem(s)	Contributors to the Problem(s)
PROVIDENCE	The children of all ages are undisciplined, out of control, and are controlling the household	Parents lack knowledge and skill regarding disciplining children in U.S. culture, and within the restraints of U.S. laws concerning child abuse and neglect Parents feel powerless to discipline their children because they feel stripped by the child abuse laws from being able to use physical discipline. Parents lack sufficient sensitivity to their children's needs for communication, affection, and affirmation Parents are exhausted, or suffer from depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, or addictions
TACOMA	Highly stressful/painful relations between parents and adolescent children	Lack of knowledge about adolescent development Strong, inflexible parental adherence to traditional Cambodian values/norms, unwillingness to bend, compromise, negotiate Lack of information about American culture

(Chart 2 continued on next page)

	Key Problem(s)	Contributors to the Problem(s)
TACOMA (cont'd)		Parents not given to open communication with their children
		Parental addictions to alcohol, drugs, gambling
		Low self esteem of parents – they feel that their traditional child-rearing methods are held in contempt by the surrounding American society
BRONX	Parents and children become "disconnected" when the children reach adolescence: lack of response to parental limits and requests, poor communication, children feel unloved	Varying levels of parent-child interaction and communication from birth onward.
		Lack of child development knowledge
		Lack of order (discipline and organization) in family life
		Parental stress and depression
	Poor diet given to children	Children make diet decisions – parents feel intimidated by children's insistence on "American" (junk) food
		Parents' lack of understanding of American concepts of a balanced diet
		Parents do not want to deny their children food

Once having identified the key problems and their contributors, one is ready to think about the goals and content of the course.

B. Course Goals and Content

Based on the assessment of ***problems*** and ***contributors***:

- ***What should be the goals for the course?***

The answer to this question tends to correspond to the first column in the chart above; i.e. the goals tend to be ***the prevention and/or correction*** of the "***key problem***" as formulated by the staff. Providence's focal goal was to help parents bring children more under control. Tacoma's goal and Bronx's goals were to reduce parent-child estrangement and its negative consequences for children and parents.

- Given the goal(s), ***What are the most important concepts and skills for parents to learn in order to move towards achieving those goals?***

The concepts and skills that a staff builds into a course tend to correspond to each staff's assessment of the major ***contributors*** to the key problem. Thus, Providence's course content was heavily oriented around parents learning to construct and implement an effective system of discipline by creating and re-enforcing "rules" that are "clear," "fair," "consistent," "enforceable," and reflect the parents' traditional Cambodian values. The content of the Providence course also included an emphasis on parents acquiring a greater sensitivity to their children's needs for communication and nurturance.

The Tacoma program had a different set of primary emphases:

- Parents learning to "bend like a river"—to understand American cultural values concerning adolescent conduct and parent-child communication and to reach a

reasonable compromise between those values and traditional Cambodian values;

- Parents learning to provide a more orderly life at home—discipline, physical order, daily routine, consistent nurturance;
- Parents understanding that addictions such as alcohol and gambling interfere with their providing an orderly and supportive home life for the child and result in their providing a negative role model to the child. Furthermore, parents taking action to reduce these addictions when they can see how they interfere with proper parenting.

In the Bronx, the primary emphases were on:

- Parents learning to understand the needs and developmentally appropriate behaviors of children at different stages of childhood;
- Responding to these with appropriate nurturance, communication and discipline;
- Parents providing a proper diet for their children and learning to re-adjust their relationships with their children around issues of diet.

On the difficult issue of Cambodian versus American values: the Providence and Bronx programs differed greatly from the Tacoma program in their approach to the question of how the parents are to resolve the differences between Cambodian and American cultures, especially as this touches on their relationships with their children. Providence and the Bronx seemed to be in total agreement on this issue; namely, ***emphasizing parents getting in touch with their most treasured***

Cambodian values and basing the rules and procedures of family life on those values. Tacoma's emphasis appeared to be almost the opposite. Rather than focusing on the re-establishment of traditional values, ***Tacoma continually emphasized the necessity of parents finding ways that those values can be modified when they radically conflict with the values and norms of the dominant American culture in which their children participate.*** This is the precise meaning of "bending like a river."

This, like other differences among the three programs, can be at least partly understood in terms of the different age focus of the program. As noted above, the Tacoma program was heavily skewed towards parents' relations with their adolescent children. Tacoma seemed to take the perspective that by the time children have reached adolescence the possibilities of re-enforcing traditional values are largely eclipsed. Rather, the survival and well-being of the parent-child relationship depends very heavily on the parent "bending" at this point. By contrast, the age focus of the Bronx program was predominantly on younger children, with an eye to adjusting to the developmental needs of those children as they grow older. Providence aimed their program across a very wide age spectrum through their focus on "discipline." Given the absence of a strong emphasis on adolescent issues, a concentration on traditional values also worked for Providence. All three program staffs, include Tacoma, clearly note the strength with which the Cambodian parents wish to hold on to their traditional values, especially those regarding deference to parents and adolescent conduct. Despite this recognition, Tacoma has chosen to take on the uphill battle of emphasizing "bend like a river." This is because they basi-

cally do not see that the parents have any other choice if they wish to retain or achieve closeness to their children.

Each Program's Particular Gifts in the Area of Course Content

Each of these three programs shows a certain genius in the way it has chosen to formulate the content of its course. Each one has very significant gifts for us. We want to summarize a few of them here:

■ ***Providence's greatest single gift to us is its strong and clear focus on the vital importance of effective discipline along with its recognition of the parents' difficulties in grasping these ideas.*** The program has carefully identified the elements of discipline and worked out ideas for systematically training parents to strengthen discipline in the home. Especially useful contributions in this regard are the course exercises and homework assignments in which parents practice formulating rules in response to traditional values and/or in responses to problem behavior in children. Providence's class session on non-verbal communication (see Session VI) also provides very important leads for us.

Both Providence and the Bronx programs have given us another gift in their emphasis on helping parents to reaffirm and act upon many of their traditional values. This seems essential and unavoidable in a situation where those values are crucial to the parent's sense of positive identity. Yet, at the same time, it does not seem complete.

■ ***Tacoma's single greatest gift to us may be their emphasis on "bending like a river." In addition to being a powerful metaphor, the idea itself is very important. We tend to agree with Tacoma, that if one ignores the Cambodian concept of***

"bending like a river" or some similar formulation, it is like sticking one's head in the sand.

The ultimate resolution of the intercultural issue would seem to be a ***subtle weaving*** of the traditional values and practices on one hand with an adaptation to the host culture on the other hand. None of the programs had worked out a way to accomplish such a resolution at the time of our visits. Yet, while difficult to accomplish, especially in the face of parents' strong insistence on the purity of traditional values, we would suggest that it nevertheless has to be done if a program is going to be strongly successful. ***This is especially true when the program attempts to cover the pre-adolescent and adolescent years.***

Another very substantial gift from the Tacoma project is the series of video clips used to stimulate discussions with parents.

Also, prior to the course, the Tacoma program brought together a group of teenagers (some of whose parents ultimately enrolled in the course) who spoke to staff and to each other about being an adolescent in a Cambodian refugee family. The group included a wide range of youth, including some runaways and gang members. At these teenage meetings, the staff collected a number of youth reflections that later became useful in opening parents' eyes to their children's experience during the course discussions.

■ ***The Bronx decision to ground the course in a knowledge of normal child development and developmentally-appropriate practice is a very important contribution. In doing so, the Bronx program has taken an alternate route to either coming out exclusively on the side of traditional values or adapting to American values. Through its emphasis on principles of***

normal child development, the Bronx program presents parents with a framework that can be viewed as universally valid.

The Bronx staff found repeatedly that the mothers in the course experienced as meaningful the ideas that staff presented on developmental appropriateness in young children and in adolescents. They also seemed relieved to hear that the child behaviors that they often found disturbing at various age levels were in fact viewed as normal in this relatively trans-cultural frame of reference.

Points of Convergence on Content

Despite the many apparent differences between these programs, a number of which can be understood in terms of differences in their target groups, there are also many ***points of convergence*** on the question of what content and skills to include in the design. These commonalties tended to increase as the respective staffs gained experience through actually implementing their courses.

For example, all three staffs felt that they had taken on too many topics in the course—a conclusion that was reached after each staff tried to handle more topics than could be adequately covered. Since there is a complex web of factors involved in refugee families' problems, there is always a tendency to want to include more topics than can be handled well in an eight class series. ***All three concluded that it is highly desirable to limit the course to a few topics in order to provide time for quality coverage and parent discussion.*** "Less is more," to use Providence's phrase. Their shared conclusions can be summarized in two ideas:

- Do not treat more than one topic in any one class session;
- Some topics (such as discipline) will require multiple class sessions, maybe as many as three or four.

The staff of all three programs also fully agreed on the importance of including six particular topics:

- ***Discipline:*** In all three programs we found an emphasis on helping parents with discipline issues; i.e., providing rules and consequences for children that are consistently formulated, communicated, and enforced. Providence put discipline at the center of the program and was the only one of the three that systematically *and* repeatedly *taught* parents how to create rules and implement them. As mentioned above, Providence has given us an important example in doing this. Bronx made discipline a major feature of the course: one session for younger children and one session for adolescents. Tacoma, while weaving issues of discipline throughout the course, concluded by the end that discipline needed to be featured as a major topic in the next course design.
- ***Alternatives to hitting children*** as a method of discipline.
- ***Praise and other positive consequences*** in response to good behavior.
- ***Structure and routine in daily life:*** Structures and routines that bring sequential order and regularity to meals, homework, play, sleep, etc.
- ***Communication with children versus isolation.*** All three programs emphasized the importance of com-

munication for children's experience of being loved and for working out alternatives to parental rigidity and unreflective use of physical punishment. The importance of this topic became increasingly greater as the staffs realized the tendency of Cambodian parents to punish their children through silence and their impatience with the idea of open communication with children.

- ***Expression of love and caring to children.*** Direct expression of love and caring to children and avoidance of actions that a child might interpret as parental rejection.

These points of convergence can be usefully arranged in a simple schema designed to look at families cross-culturally.[21] The schema suggests that there are two major axes or dimensions to family life which one finds universally:

- One is the dimension of ***order:*** hierarchical order; sequential order in time; physical order; normative order through rules and their sanctions.
- The other dimension is ***nurturance, mutuality, communication.*** These are processes through which people show affection, caring, and caretaking to each other, through which they listen and respond empathically to each other, etc.

Each culture emphasizes a particular range of values, relationships and behaviors on each of these dimensions and has particular ways of connecting and combining these two dimensions in daily life. However, attending to both dimensions as well as a blending of the two are indispensable to family vitality as a cooperative unit and a unit that successfully raises its young. It is not surprising then, that we should

find that our six points of convergence among the three programs neatly fits on this scheme:

Order	Nurturance/Mutuality/ Communication
Discipline Alternatives to hitting	Praise and recognition Communication
Structure and routine in daily life	Expressions of love and caring

Process Goals and Emphases

- ***What classroom processes will be most beneficial in helping parents internalize the ideas and learn the associated skills?***

In this area, we find very strong agreement among the three programs. The principles which governed the basic assumptions of these three programs are similar:

Parents will learn best when the following conditions are present:

- *Trust:* Parents need to experience trust towards the instructors and towards the other parents in the group. Therefore, the building of staff-parent and parent-parent relationships needs to be a primary concern. The course emphasizes communal and emotional support among all the participants.
- ***A focus on parents' own problems:*** The course is built around the parents' most deeply-felt problems and concerns. The parents' formulation and re-formulation of problems drives the course.

- ***Problem solving through dialogue—maximal parent participation:*** The course emphasizes parental participation in active problem solving dialogue with each other and with the staff around their felt problems and concerns. This not only keeps the course relevant, it does at least four other things: 1) teaches parents an ***active, participative approach to solving problems*** concerning their children, thereby empowering them; 2) brings to bear the real-life considerations of the parents, and, hence, has a chance of evolving superior solutions; 3) gives parents insight into each other's lives with the possibility that this will give them courage and lessen the feeling of being isolated and condemned; and 4) provides an opportunity for parents' and instructors' perspectives to influence each other.

- ***Concrete learning:*** Frequent use of visual aids and role play. The Tacoma video scenarios, the Providence use of picture cards, and staff role play of family scenarios used in all three programs were immensely popular with the participants and effective as teaching strategies. All three programs agreed on the value of concrete approaches to learning and felt the need to include more of them the next time around. All of these highly successful visual devices shared a common feature—they were about ***stories***—stories portraying deep and familiar themes. This is one of the major clues we have for the future design of courses.[22]

- ***Continual review:*** Effective parental learning depends on continual review and re-integration of the material being learned. This has two major components: 1) a weekly review in which the ideas of the previous week(s) are carefully brought into discussion; 2) a spiralling approach of continuing to utilize previously-

learned ideas in the discussions and exercises.

Implementing the Process and Content Goals: Course Sequence and Strategy

- ***Structure of the course sequence as a whole.*** What is a productive sequence of class sessions? Why is that a productive order? What ties the class sessions together?

In each of the three courses, the first class session was devoted to explaining the purpose of the course and then providing a structure that would help parents articulate the parenting problems that related to the course.

Providence and Bronx approached this process very directly. The Tacoma approach was very indirect, for reasons that we will try to make clear.

In Providence, the staff stated, "You told us you were having problems with your children. Tell us what those problems are. That's what we're going to work on for eight weeks." The parents corrected the staff, saying that they (the parents) did not have problems; it was their children that had the problems. Staff picked up on this parental definition of the situation and said "Okay, let's talk about the problems your children are having and how we could change that in your children." The staff also introduced a list of problems that had been elicited from the parents who attended the previous course. This pair of strategies was enough to help parents begin to talk about their problems, at least in an abbreviated way. (see Providence Story above). However, their unwillingness to fully own the problems as their own (i.e. their saying that these were their children's problems not theirs) may have been an indication that they were not yet comfortable talking about their personal issues in the group.

In the Bronx program, the staff started this part of the session by showing the parents the Cambodian video that had been made by the Tacoma staff portraying a series of significant family issues. They then said, "You know, these are problems that many Cambodian parents face, that all parents face. Could you go around and introduce yourself and tell us do you have any similar problems? What are the issues that you face?" Staff added that they needed the parents to share some of their personal information in order to help them. The results were quite fruitful. Parents shared major concerns in at least five areas that subsequently played a major role in shaping the course.

The Tacoma staff took a much different approach. Their strategy was based on a number of considerations. First, they did not have a previous relationship with parents as was the case in Providence and the Bronx. Secondly, they were dealing predominantly with the parents of teenagers. The problems experienced with children of this age level, especially when they erupt into acts such as running away, are particularly shameful for parents. As mentioned in the Tacoma story, the knee-jerk reaction of Cambodian parents to a family whose child has run away is often one of condemnation.

The Tacoma staff adopted a rule of thumb: never ask parents directly about their personal problems. Instead, create a stimulus and a context in which they can volunteer those problems when they are ready to do so. After the initial explanation that the course would help parents to solve problems together (see Tacoma Story), staff showed the video sequence on typical family conflicts around the issues of teenage dating, parental gambling and alcoholism, and teenage gangs and drug use. They then conducted the discus-

sion around the question of "problems that Cambodians face in America." The parents participated actively, echoing many of the problems presented in the video (and, implicitly, many of their own). In the second session, parents began to raise their concerns about the child abuse laws which they saw as disempowering them as effective parents. Truly personal issues did not come up until Session IV, at which time two parents shared some very significant problems about their relationships with their children. As alternatives to asking parents directly about their problems, the Tacoma staff frequently asked questions following the video clip such as: "Do you know anyone who has a problem similar to this," or "What suggestions would you have for parents who have this kind of problem?" These dialogues sometimes led to sharing.

Each of the programs had its own particular formula for creating a sequence of classes that built one upon the other and provided opportunity to bring the parents and other family problem material into the exchange. Providence rooted the sequence issues of discipline (Sessions II, III, and IV). Bronx grounded the course in child development concepts (Sessions II and III) and then moved on to discussions of discipline, framed in the spirit of the earlier child development sessions. Tacoma started off with "Differences between Cambodian and American Culture" (Session II). This provided a context for all that was to follow and a framework for their ongoing discussion of "bend like a river."

- ***Structure of the individual class sessions.*** How can one structure the individual class sessions so that they are comfortable and productive for the participants?

It is generally acknowledged that a routine structure repeated from one class meeting to another gives the participants a sense of familiarity and continuity from one class to another and thereby helps them to be comfortable and to learn. What can we learn from the three programs about creating such a structure?

Following the introductory session(s), each of the programs moved into standardized class structure that ran through the rest of the course.

- *Providence*
  - Review (of previously covered ideas);
  - Staff presentation of new material;
  - Discussion.

- *Tacoma*
  - Presentation of material;
  - Video clip dramatizing the theme;
  - Staff discussion of alternatives to the situation portrayed in the video clip;
  - Group discussion.

- *Bronx:*
  - Review;
  - Staff presentation of new material;
  - "Go-around" and discussion (staff asks parents questions which draws out their thoughts, experience, and discussion on the topic);
  - Staff recommendations, often drawing on ideas that emerged in the discussion.

- ***Logistics within the class sessions.*** What seating arrangements, discussion aids, and provisions for breaks and snacks will best serve the purposes of the course?

Each of the projects assumed or discovered that parents will be most likely to feel comfortable and share when they are in a circle. Each program adapted to their particular surroundings to create some kind of circular arrangement. Providence set up a three-quarter circle of chairs, recognizing that straight rows of chairs in their previous course had stymied conversation and had resulted in people in the back gossiping about people in the front. Tacoma had the parents sit around a large table. In the Bronx classes, which took place in a small space, parents chose to sit on the floor barefoot, in a circle (all women's group).

Two of the programs used newsprint to record parents' ideas.

Providence was the only program to have a formal break time. Among other things, the men said they needed it to have time to "warm their teeth" (have a smoke).

All three programs provided some kind of snacks for parents. Providence staff provided drinks and munchies at break time. Tacoma staff set out drinks and snacks to be available throughout the entire class session. In the Bronx group the mothers brought and prepared a diverse set of fruit and other delicacies to be eaten together at the end of the class. Often mothers would arrive early to start cutting the fruit. The preparation and eating of this fruit meal provided a major communal experience at each session.

Recruitment of Parent Participants

- ***Recruitment principles.*** What are the considerations for a recruitment process that will successfully motivate parents to join the class, adequately prepare them for the course, and select parents who will attend regularly and function well in the course?

In all cases, participation in the group was voluntary. Providence and the Bronx invited parents from one-to-one counseling relationships that were already in place.. Providence also recruited a few people from the men's and women's support groups that were functioning in the clinic under their guidance. Providence found that the one or two participants who had been referred from other agencies and with whom they did not have a previous relationship showed very poor attendance. The Bronx staff deliberately left out people who they felt would not come regularly.

The Tacoma recruitment process was radically different and highly adaptive to their situation. In brief, recruitment through the personal Cambodian networks of the two Cambodian staff worked extremely well. Parents were sought who were having problems with their children and wanted to join a support group. Recruitment through public and private agencies did not work at all.

Logistical Support for Parents

- What kinds of supports—such as ***reminder telephone calls, transportation for parents, child care,*** and ***one-to-one supplementary counselling***—will be important in getting parents to the course and helping them get the most out of the experience?

In each of the three programs, staff deemed it highly desirable, in fact, basically necessary, to telephone each parent the evening before the class meeting. They found that very frequently parents simply forgot if this was not done.

The Providence program gave car rides to the women participants. The Tacoma program picked up virtually everyone in a van, on two runs of the housing project and its vicinity. This turned out to be a highly effective relationship-building process and provided a context for fruitful discussion. At the beginning, it was a way that staff could show that they really cared about, valued, and recognized the individual participants. In the Bronx, all of the participants lived in the immediate vicinity of the clinic or on a single bus route leading directly to the clinic. In this case, it did not seem necessary to transport people.

Child care was provided by the Providence and Bronx sites. In relation to child care, two factors differentiated these programs from the Tacoma program. First, the age structure of the Providence and Bronx families was younger. Secondly, the meetings took place during the day when older children and spouses were not available for baby sitting. The Tacoma meetings took place during the evenings when informal child care possibilities may have been more available to the participants. The Tacoma Story elaborates on the child care process there.

While one-to-one counseling was largely built into the Providence and Bronx programs, it was not part of the Tacoma setting. In the latter case, staff offered their personal availability for parents to discuss issues one-to-one and/or seek referrals for special problems.

Implementation

- What kinds of ***flexibility in course content*** and ***flexibility in teaching strategies*** are often required as the course unfolds?

Part of the strength of a design built upon parents' statements of their own problems is that it can continually regenerate the meaningfulness of the parents' experience in the course. The program structure needs to be flexible enough to accommodate this. All three programs illustrate this idea. Notable examples are the Bronx staff introducing new topics in response to parents' concerns about safety and women's problems with their spouses.

- What kind of staff planning between sessions is necessary to keep the course smoothly flowing and vital?

All three project staffs agreed that planning between sessions is highly important and that their program suffered when this kind of planning was not possible. In addition, it was found that it is useful for staff to take time to make a written analysis of the class session prior to the planning meeting. The process of writing a report stimulates reflection and produces a contribution that can be kept for long-range planning.

Conclusion

We have tried in this planning chapter to highlight some of the most useful features of these three programs, including areas in which the three staffs have come to common conclusions and priorities.

We have also tried to show that often the diversity between programs leads to the possibility of understanding some universal principles that contribute to that diversity—that there can be a kind of illuminating unity underlying the diversity.

A mountain woman and her child in Luang Probang, Laos

United Nations/J. Robaton

VIII

EVALUATION OF PROGRAM IMPACT

Data-Gathering Strategies

As part of the two-day visit to each site, material was gathered about the impact of the three programs on their parent participants. A two-part approach was designed in an attempt to get both breadth and depth of coverage in the small amount of time available for the task. This appendix contains a description of these two approaches, an appraisal of their limitations, a report of the findings, and some interpretations of the whole.

The first data-gathering strategy was the ***Group Survey***. On the day prior to the class visit at each site, Dan Scheinfeld worked out a series of questions with the program staff to be addressed to the parents attending the class.

The questions, which varied in both content and number from site to site, were created by each site's staff to reflect the goals of each particular program. It is interesting, in this regard, to see how the questions vary from one program to another.

The challenge in designing this survey was to produce a data-gathering approach that was simple, not anxiety provoking, and which required only a very minimal amount of literacy from the participants. The survey was administered to the

group by a Khmer speaker other than the course teachers. Parents were not required to put their names on their responses.

Each parent was given a form that had three response boxes for each question. These boxes varied in size, corresponding to three possible answers: A Lot ("*Yang Chreon*"), A Middle Amount ("*Mattium*"), and Little or None ("*Chuoy Tech Naas*"). It was determined prior to the site visits that these three categories were familiar to Khmer speakers of even the most modest education. At the last site, the Bronx, the earlier version was replaced by a four-category form: A Lot, Quite a Bit, A Little, and Not at All (see Appendix A).

The course teachers provided the transition to the survey process by introducing the idea of a survey. They told the parents that it was very important to give accurate answers so that the program could learn how to better serve them and other parents in the future. They also assured the parents that their responses would be confidential; they would not be asked to put their names on their papers. The teachers then turned the process over to the Khmer speaker who was administering the survey and left the room.

The survey administrator explained the use of the form, with several examples, until he felt that the group understood. As part of this process, he drew the boxes on newsprint along with their Khmer labels. As each question came up, the number of the question was written on a blackboard or on newsprint to help the parents keep track of where they were in the questionnaire.

For example, after placing a "1" on the board, the survey administrator read the first question. At Providence, the ques-

tion was, "Have the classes helped you to know what to do when your children do not listen to you?" The parents were then instructed to put a check in one of the three boxes. The survey administrator then wrote a "2" on the board and gave the second question. This continued to the end of the question list. The total process took between 30 and 45 minutes.

The second data-gathering approach was the ***Parent Interview***. At each site the project staff selected two parent participants to be individually interviewed. In Providence, a married couple was selected for one of the interviews. Parents were selected by the respective staffs on the basis of two criteria: 1) staff felt the person would be comfortable and articulate in an interview situation; and 2) the person had shown some degree of progress and, hence, could talk about the course's benefits for them and their children.

The purpose of these interviews was not to provide a representative sample of the participating parents from the particular site. That would be impossible with a sample of only two from each site. The purpose, rather, was to get a sense of the experience from the participants' point of view that went deeper than the data that could be provided by the group survey.

The interviews were aided by a translator: Mr. Samnang at Providence, Mr. Sovit at Tacoma, and Mr. Lang at the Bronx. This was usually the same person who conducted the group survey at the class session.

Group Survey Results

Providence

Parental responses to the Providence survey were very positive. A list of the questions and the response patterns are provided below:

	A Lot	A Middle Amount	Little or None
1. Have the classes helped you to know what to do when your children do not listen to you?	12	2	0
2. Have the classes helped you to get a more orderly life at home with your children?	10	4	0
3. Have the classes helped you to decide what are the important things in your culture that you want to pass on to your children?	11	3	0
4. Are you now better able to ask your children if they have problems and to listen to what they have to say to you?	10	4	0
5. Have the classes helped you to make rules for your children that are fair?	11	3	0
6. Have the classes helped you to make rules for your children that are clear?	9	5	0
7. Have the classes helped you to make rules for your children that are consistent?	12	2	0
8. Have the classes taught you ways to let your children know that you are pleased that they are following the rules and unhappy when they are breaking the rules?	13	1	0

Tacoma

Owing to the very high ratings in response to the Providence survey, we wondered if the parents were giving us uniformly high ratings out of a desire to please. To test for this possibility, we decided to include a question in the Tacoma survey about an issue that was ***not*** dealt with in the course. The staff chose "Has the course helped you to help your children with their homework?" The idea was that if parents were giving us reflective and honest answers to the questions we would certainly see lower ratings on an item that was not included in the course. The results at Tacoma were as follows:

	A Lot	A Middle Amount	Little or None
1. Has the course helped you to understand American culture?	20	0	0
2. I feel happier because this group is sympathetic and supportive of me.	20	0	0
3. Has this course helped you to have a more orderly life with your children?	19	1	0
4. Has this course helped you to help your children with their homework?	16	4	0
5. Has the information that you got in this course about gangs, drugs, alcohol, runaways, and other things been helpful to you?	20	0	0
6. If there was another course just like this one, would you recommend to your relatives or friends that they attend the course?	18	2	0

The somewhat lower ratings in response to question #4 (the homework question) give us some assurance that the answers to the survey as a whole were not totally skewed to the high end out of a desire to please. But the assurance is not overwhelming. Part of the problem is the possibility that achieving greater order in the home—a major goal of the course—especially in the form of daily schedules and routines, could be interpreted by the parents as providing an aid to the children's homework.

Bronx

In order to more thoroughly test for the possibility that survey results were being distorted towards the positive end, we included three questions in the Bronx survey that were clearly irrelevant to the content of the course: "This course has helped me to paint my apartment" (item 4), "This course has helped me to fix my television set" (item 8), and "This course has helped me to clean chickens better" (item 12). As mentioned above, we also provided a four-point scale (rather than a three-point scale).

	A Lot	Quite a Bit	A Little	None at All
1. This course has helped to set up and follow a daily schedule for my children and myself.	3	9	1	0
2. This course has helped me to make my home safer for my children.	7	6	0	0
3. This course has helped me to know what to do when my children don't listen.	6	5	2	0
4. This course has helped me to paint my apartment.	0	0	0	13
5. This course has helped me to hit my children less and use other ways to discipline them.	7	6	0	0
6. This course has helped me to listen to my children when they have problems.	5	8	0	0
7. This course has helped me to give my children healthier food.	12	1	0	0
8. This course has helped me to fix my television set.	1	0	0	12
9. This course has helped me to feel closer to my children.	7	6	0	0
10. This course has helped me to understand my children better.	12	1	0	0
11. This course has helped me to say "no" to my children when necessary (to set limits).	11	1	0	1
12. This course has helped me to clean chickens better.	2	2	0	9

Comments on the Group Survey Results

The results on the three "irrelevant" questions in the Bronx survey were fairly reassuring in relation to their intent; namely, to show us to what extent the parents might be unreflectively skewing their ratings to the high end. The overall low ratings on these three questions also suggest that the parents tended to understand the meaning of the questions posed.

It would seem to be truly impossible to understand precisely the meaning of these responses. First of all, we have no control over the meaning of quantities like "A Lot," "A Middle Amount," "A Little," etc. to the participants. These terms could mean quite different things to different people.

Secondly, the responses come from parents who by and large have no experience in responding to this type of task. Yet if we allow for the parents giving generous interpretations to the higher rating categories (for example, not having rigorous standards for coding "A Lot"), most of the responses are plausible. At the very least, the responses suggest very favorable attitudes towards the three courses on the part of the participants.

Parent Interview Results

Four key areas were covered in the parent interviews across the three sites: 1) things the parent learned from the course and how they had been applied in the family; 2) aspects of the course that the parent enjoyed; 3) thoughts about how to improve the course for the next set of parents; and 4) ideas about what the parent would include in a second eight-week course if it were offered in the future (see Appendix B for interview questions).

The following commentary provides highlights from each of the six interviews across these four major topics. Pseudonyms are used for all of the participants cited.

1. Things Learned That Were Helpful

"Did you learn some things in the course that were helpful to you in your life with your children?"—"Have you tried to do this at home?"

Providence

Voeuth and Chamrouen, the first interviewees, report that as a result of the course they have set up rules for their 10-year-old boy. This has been very important to them and the single most important thing they have learned in the course. They had only "a little bit" of rule-making in their home prior to the course. The newly-established rules take the form of a daily sequence for the ten-year-old: be home at three, make up bed, finish homework, and do some house cleaning. They said that they have not needed to worry about "consequences" because the child follows the rules.

They have two other children: a six-year-old and a child who is married and out of the home. Their account focused on the 10-year-old.

Viasna (who spoke English during most of the interview) has two children living in the home: a boy of 10, and a girl of high school age. He has established a schedule for the boy as a result of the course. "I made a schedule for them, so that they can do things that follow the rules: home at 3:00 p.m., do homework, take shower, eat dinner, relax a bit, go to bed by 8:30 p.m." The child can watch TV on weekends or during his relaxing time on weekdays. Viasna mentioned the

importance of rules being clear and fair. That way "he (the child) does not get mad and upset" by the rule. He also mentioned the importance of communicating with his wife about rules for the children so that the rules are consistent. Viasna said that the rules work well. However, this child was not a difficult child to begin with; "He does not give me a headache," (i.e., like some other people's children do).

Viasna tells about another important practice he learned from the course: "watching my child in school." He noticed that his daughter was very reticent to talk to him about her work at school. "I ask many times and she decide to tell me." He discovered through these conversations that his daughter had failed history and math. "I come here and talk to Socheat (one of the two teachers) and she make a couple of phone calls to the school." The story nicely ends with the daughter getting special help with the two subjects. Viasna adds, "I have more idea about school when I talk with my daughter. The class is important to me to take care of my kid." Viasna commented that many Cambodian teenagers are afraid to tell their parents about failures at school. "They are afraid their parents will hit them, call them 'lazy', and yell at them."

Finally, Viasna mentioned having learned more about the importance of modelling for the child. "We want to tell the kid to do something, but we have to make the same example to the kid. If we say don't smoke, we don't smoke, or the kids will say, 'Why do you smoke, Daddy, when you tell me I shouldn't smoke? Now I go outside to smoke. Before (the course), I used to smoke at home."

Tacoma

The two parents interviewed at Tacoma, ***Sokha*** and ***Bunthong***, are very different than the parents at the other two sites. Both of them currently have teenage children from whom they are significantly estranged. Sokha, the first interviewee, recently lost her grandson to the streets. This boy, who she has raised since he was five years old, ran away from home about two weeks before the interview. Sokha was so distraught about this loss that she was barely able to conduct the interview. She constantly returned to the pain of the lost grandson, wondering what she could do and who could help her.

Sokha said (through the translator), "I understand more about how the situation is and how I can discipline the child and help the child. It (the course) is helping me to be clear about how to live with them." Sokha has responsibility not only for her grandson but also for an adopted son of about the same age. "I have tried to teach them to stay home. I have made rules for them about not going out too much, but they don't listen. It does not work." Her depression over the runaway grandson made it impossible for her to say much more. It is clear that we are dealing in this case with a situation that is radically different than that of Viasna or Voeuth and Chamrouen in Providence. The children are much older, and the pattern of estrangement has progressed to an incomparable degree.

Bunthong, the other Tacoma interviewee, experiences a great deal of tension with his 19-year-old son. This son ran away in the recent past, but is now living at home. Bunthong also has a 15-year-old daughter living at home. He reports that what he has learned in the course applies differently to his

two children. He says he learned a good deal in the course about the importance of giving positive rewards to children. This works well with his 15-year-old daughter, who "goes to school every day and wants to learn much." But it does not work with his 19-year-old son who refuses to go to school and has already run away once. With this child, he resorts to threats, including the threat of reporting the boy to the police. "Sometimes it works," he adds. He does not seem to be able to find his way to a more positive approach.

Bunthong acknowledges the validity of the course's emphasis on "bending like a river," but he also experiences consistent inner conflict in trying to follow this idea. He interprets it to mean that one allows space for the child to live out some of the norms that they are learning in the American world outside the home. Some of these norms are easy to support, such as the school's emphasis on academic achievement that his daughter espouses.

Other norms are very difficult for him to embrace; for example, the more informal posture towards adults that his children bring home from the outside. In Cambodian terms, these behaviors represent a distinct violation of the rules of "respect" and appropriate "communication" with adults. He said that he tries to bend with these a bit. "I have to agree with that. If I put too much pressure on the child, he/she might run away."

At the same time, he is thoroughly uncomfortable with and opposed to his daughter's desire to follow the American social pattern for girls. "The Cambodian way is a child goes to school and comes home and stays home and does homework. The American way is that the kid has freedom, can go out

there to a friend's house, go anywhere without the parent's permission. I am not comfortable with that." While the teachers of the course would not suggest to Bunthong that his teenage daughter go to places without permission, this is his present interpretation of American norms.

Bunthong is in deep conflict. His relationship with his 15-year-old daughter seems to be under control at the moment, but he is struggling with the course's suggestions about how to improve that relationship and build for the future with his children. He seems to be basically in an aversive posture with both of his children, even though he seems to relate more harmoniously with his daughter than with his son.

Bronx

The Bronx interviewees are both mothers of relatively young children. ***Lanh*** has six children ranging in age from 1-14 years old. ***Sem*** has five children. The youngest is 6 and the oldest is 12.

Lanh entered the course feeling "overwhelmed" by her life with her six children at home. As a result of her course work, she has now set up a daily routine that has helped dramatically in relieving the stress of her life at home. She wakes up at 7:30 a.m., wakes all the children, and gives the three youngest children breakfast. The other three, ages 8, 11 and 14, get breakfast at school. She provides lunch for the three younger children at a regular time each day. The three older children come directly home from school, and she provides a regular snack for them, often made from lunch leftovers. After the snack, they do homework. Dinner is at 6:00 p.m. Bedtime is at 9:00 p.m. Sometimes she allows the children to watch TV before bedtime.

Prior to the course, she did not wake the younger children at a regular time. Each had to be fed breakfast separately as they woke up and then, later, had to be fed lunch separately as they became hungry again. Prior to the new schedule, the older children came home when they wanted. They bought junk food for a snack and then played and watched television. She did not place an emphasis on doing homework.

The result of the new arrangement is that Lanh now has "times to relax" throughout the day. There is much greater order to the family's life. Lanh and the children are benefitting greatly from the change. ***"I feel much less overwhelmed because of the new schedule." Lanh adds that the child safety measures that she has implemented from the course have also contributed to her feeling less overwhelmed.***

Lanh feels that the course has given her a renewed faith and strength in her native Cambodian culture. This is most significantly reflected through changes in food patterns. Lanh says she "reads the labels" now when she goes to the grocery to separate high sugar content foods from the more natural foods. She buys real orange juice and apple juice instead of the sugary fruit drinks she habitually bought before. She has cut down on buying cookies and candy for the children. "The class taught me that Cambodian food is good food. They told me that Khmer (Cambodian) soup and fish were very good for us. Before that I had doubts about food. They taught me that Cambodian food is good. The children didn't seem to be growing well and I thought that the American food (advertised on TV) was better than the Cambodian food."

In the two Bronx interviews, we posed additional questions about course content and goals in areas that were not mentioned spontaneously by the parent in his or her response to the open-ended question about what she/he had learned from the course. In response to these specific probes, Lanh added the following information:

Question: "Did you learn anything about what to do when your children don't listen?"

Lanh: "I learned not to hit them. Now I try to explain that they should listen. I still want to tap them. But I learned not to hit hard. It could make an accident. They might come and take the child away. I warn them first, and usually I don't have to hit at all."

Question: "Did you learn anything about listening to your child's problems?"

Lanh: "I learned to listen to them, to listen more to what they want."

Question: "Why is that a good idea?"

Lanh: "Because they calm down and listen to each other. Before that I did not listen and did not talk nicely to the child. The children get along better with mother when we talk openly. We talk to each other a lot more now."

Question: "What did you do before the class?"

Lanh: "Before the class, I just stayed by myself and hit the children a lot. Now we talk and I calm down and they calm down. I calm down and relax and the children have better behavior."

Question: "Do you feel stronger and more effective as a parent now?"

Lanh: "Yes...and I want to learn how to write."

There is a likely connection between these newly-emerging patterns of interaction that Lanh describes and the stress reducing routines that she has introduced as a result of the course. ***Bringing greater order to the day and reducing the experience of being overwhelmed are no doubt necessary conditions for the more positive engagements with the children.***

Sem's first responses refer to the interaction between communication, nurturance and scheduling. "I talk to my children now before they go to school and I prepare breakfast before school. I learned that it's important to feed the children, even though they might get something at school. When the kids come home from school, I give them a snack. I used to do that before the course, but now I give them a different kind of food. Before I gave them sugar. Now I give them fruit. It's better. They show us about cereal, soda and juice in the course. One cereal is sweet and one is not sweet. Juice and cereal are better for them. At six o'clock they do their homework now. Dinner at 7:00 p.m. Bedtime at 8:00 p.m. They want to watch TV but I say, 'No, tomorrow you go to school. You have to wake up early.' TV is mostly on the weekend. Before the course, the kids would say they have no homework and I would say okay. I let five people be out of control. Now I control strictly."

"When they ask to buy something like a toy in the store and I don't have the money, but they insist, I need to talk to them and say, 'Now I don't have the money. Maybe next time.' They will listen and then go home and be happy. Before when they had a temper tantrum in the store, I buy it."

"I learned about how to discipline them. When they make a mistake or do not listen, you have to talk nicely about what is good and what is bad. Talk openly. Never hit them. If they break the rule, no TV."

"When the child gets to be 15 years old and she is going to a friend's house and you have doubts about it, you should call the friend's house. Check on the child."

"The video tapes (from Tacoma) about mother is gambler and the drunk father, and her daughter had a boyfriend because she saw the mother gamble and father drink. That's why she left home. That's no good for a child. The daughter can't even study."

Like Lanh, Sem also had some answers to the specific *probes* that we asked in the Bronx interviews:

> *Question: "Did the course help you know what to do when you get angry at your child?"*
>
> Sem: "I learn to talk with them when I get angry, before I hit them. I still get angry. But I talk. I know how to control myself."
>
> *Question: "Do you feel stronger and more effective as a parent?"*
>
> Sem: "Yes. Now I think that I am the parent and not the child. Before, the child wanted to play like me."

2. Things the Parent Enjoyed in the Course

"What are the things in the course that you enjoyed a lot?"

Parents gave two types of answers to this question. The first type referred to processes in the group. At Providence, parents mentioned the role-play scenarios enacted by the staff

to illustrate family dynamics. These vivid enactments often stuck in the parents' minds because they were penetrating in their insight and amusing at the same time (partly because they were penetrating). Voeuth, in particular, mentioned the scene where Serei (course teacher) came in as the drunken father, stumbling in the door at midnight, saying to the wife (Socheat, other course teacher), "Hey, my dear!"

The second and more frequent response to the "enjoyment" question dealt with the empowerment that the parent felt as a result of participating in the course and acting on the ideas or insights they had gained. For example:

> Voeuth: "I enjoyed setting up the rules."
>
> Viasna: "I enjoyed learning things I didn't know."
>
> Lanh: "I enjoyed most the part about the food. Now I prepare a meal for my family and I feel happy because I am clear about it now. No doubts any more." "Also, the schedule for the children. Now I have time to relax."
>
> Sem: "Disciplining the children in the family—how to behave in the family. I enjoyed that."

3. Parent Evaluation of the Teaching Methods Used

"Is there some way we could change the course to make it more interesting or more useful to parents like yourself?"

Most parents had difficulty answering this question. They felt stymied and/or felt that correcting the work of a teacher was inappropriate. The general thrust of these responses was to increase the amount of concrete presentations of ideas; i.e., through pictures, role-play and video.

4. Thoughts about a Second Eight Weeks

"If you had a chance to take some more of this course, for another eight weeks, what are some things that you would like to learn?"

Answers to this question centered mostly on literacy needs and wanting to know more about American life.

Literacy:

Voeuth and Chamrouen: "Learn English."

Lanh: "I want to learn more writing and I want to be able to read the signs when I go out with the children."

American life:

Bunthong: "I want to learn more about American culture; (especially) about American (family) rules."

Sem: "I want to learn more about Americans. I don't know much about American way of life."

A Cambodian girl holding a United Nations flag

UN Photo 186080/P.S. Sudhakaran

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IX

CONCLUSIONS

Some Conclusions on the Parent Interviews

In reviewing the six parent interviews in the preceding chapter, one can see patterns that are worth noting.

First, the most significant changes that were reported occurred in parents' relations with young children or latency-age children. Latency refers to age 5 to onset of puberty. In all four of these cases, the changes centered around the institution of a more orderly sequential structuring of the day. Most of the innovations concerning "rules" were ordered in a sequential daily routine. This was the case with Voeuth and Chamrouen, Viasna, Lanh and Sem. Further, the introduction of these routines seemed to facilitate the realization of other kinds of important changes, such as talking with children more and disciplining in less harsh ways.

Secondly, in most of the parents that we interviewed we could see a notable ***resilience: a capacity to move from a depressed condition to a renewed level of vitality and personal empowerment.*** In each case, this resilience was nurtured by the parent program.

Working with parents of older adolescent children still seems to be the toughest nut to crack. The reasons for this are self evident. Strong peer groups combined with long-deteriorat-

ing, "disconnected," parent-child relationships present enormous obstacles to change.

Some would say that, given limited resources, it is better to work primarily with the parents of younger children. In our opinion, however, it is too early to make such a decision. ***Rather it is time to search for innovative approaches that might look quite different from the programs that are applicable to parents of the younger children.***

A major innovation that we have seen in this project is the exploratory work done by the Tacoma program with their teenage group (see the Tacoma Story in this guide). While the intent of this encounter was mainly to gain insights to bring to the parents' group, ***the idea suggests the possibility of working with a parent group and a teenage child group in tandem.***

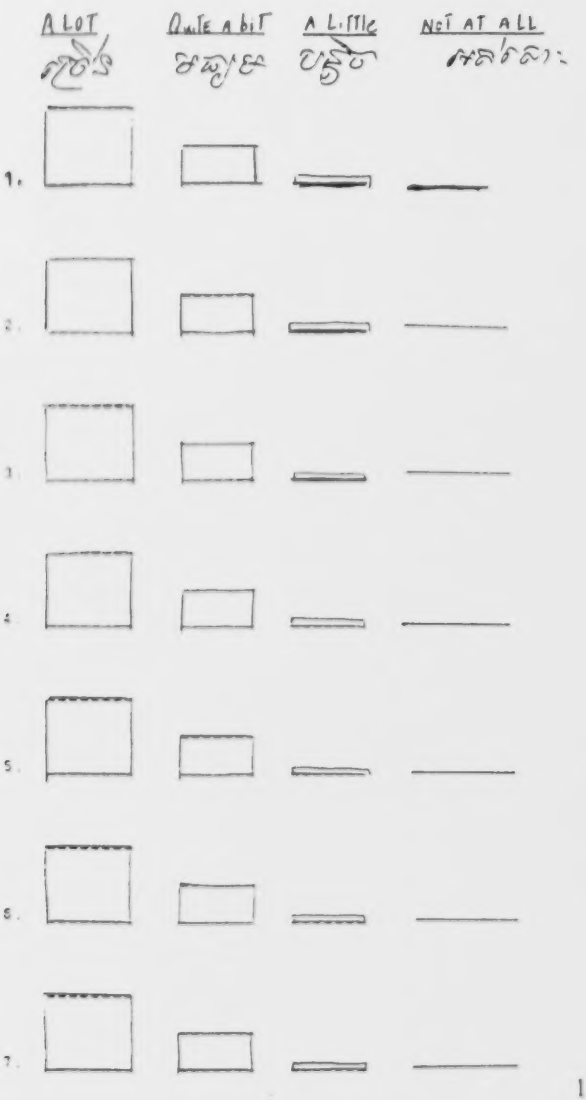
Another important lead will be to pursue the intricately difficult but vital process of striking a balance between respect for the traditional culture on one hand, and "bending like a river" on the other hand. In doing so, parents can learn to "bend" from a position that is strongly and reflectively grounded in their own heritage.

Final Thought

We hope that the guide as a whole has been useful to you. In every respect, the usefulness of ideas that have been presented are due to the sensitivity, creative intelligence, and devotion of the three project staffs and their ICCB sponsor and to the trust, good will, and life-seeking energy of the participating parents. We owe them all a great debt.

Appendix A

RESPONSE FORM FOR GROUP SURVEY – Bronx



	A LOT	QUITE A BIT	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				

Appendix B

PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Key Questions in the Individual Parent Interviews

(Administered at Providence, Tacoma, and the Bronx)

Introduction: My job is to tell the story of this course in a way that will help other people who want to work with Cambodian parents. We are learning how to make this course better for parents and we want to talk to you about what you learned in the course and what you thought about it.

1. Did you learn some things in the course that were helpful to you in your life with your children?

1a. (if necessary) Have you tried to do this at home?

2. What were the things in this course that you enjoyed a lot?

3. Is there some way that we could change the course to make it more interesting or more useful to parents like yourself?

4. If you had a chance to take some more of this course, for another eight weeks, what are some of the things that you would like to learn?

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An Asian View of Cultural Differences

Dr. Mai Van Trang

We live in time.
We are always at rest.
We are passive.
We like to contemplate.
We accept the world as it is.

We live in peace with nature.

Religion is our first love.
We delight to think about the meaning of life.
We believe in freedom of silence.
We lapse into meditation.
We marry first, then love.
Our marriage is the beginning of a love affair.
It is an indissoluble bond.
Our love is mute.
We try to conceal it from the world.

Self-denial is a secret to our survival.
We are taught from the cradle to want less and less.
We glorify austerity and renunciation.
Poverty is to us a badge of spiritual elevation.
In the sunset years of life we renounce the world and prepare for the hereafter.

You live in space.
You are always on the move.
You are aggressive.
You like to act.
You try to change it according to your blueprint.

You try to impose your will on her.
Technology is your passion.
You delight in physics.

You believe in freedom of speech.
You strive for articulation.
You love first, then marry.
Your marriage is the happy end of a romance.
It is a contract.
Your love is vocal.
You delight in showing it to others.

Self-assertiveness is the key to your success.
You are urged every day to want more and more.
You emphasize gracious living and enjoyment.
It is to you a sign of degradation.
You retire to enjoy the fruits of your labor.

(as quoted in Dr. Carolyn Williams. **Reasons for Living and Hoping**, ICCB, 1989)